The Military's Gay Ban – Why Clinton Should Hang Tough

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Inside the Mind of Clinton's Economic Guru

by Mickey Kaus

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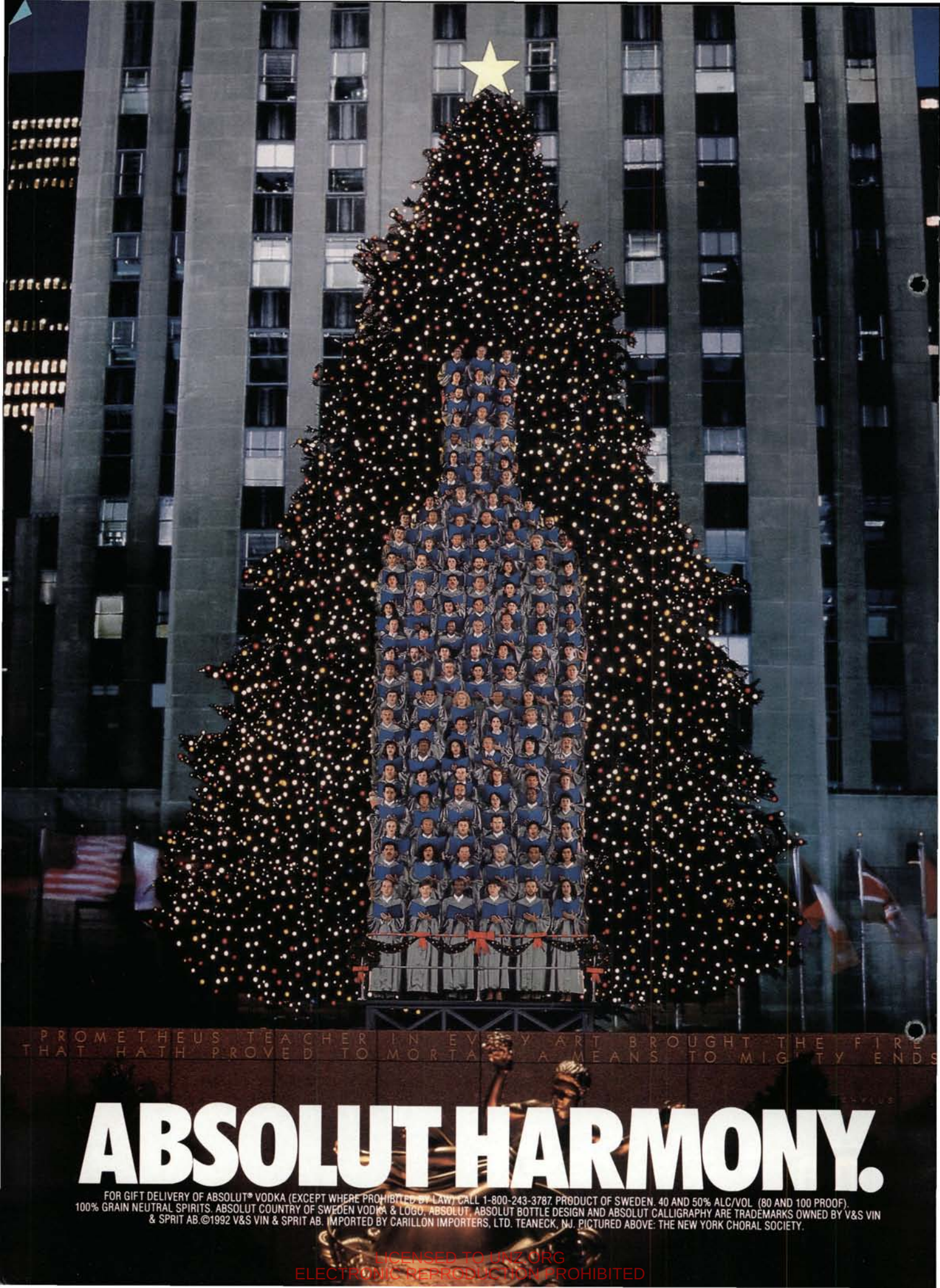

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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DECEMBER 7, 1992

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CORRESPONDENCE

Lunchtime

To the editors:

As an erstwhile admirer of Barbara Grizzuti Harrison's writing, I must confess to disappointment with her article "Lunch with Bar" (November 9). She is discomfited by the size of the portions. Assuming that they are dining at taxpayers' expense, I can only be grateful that this is not another example of governmental waste. Besides, it strikes me as rather generous on the part of the First Lady to entertain someone who was clearly a hostile interviewer.

Harrison is chagrined that her "personal" questions are met with "political—campaign stump" responses. Obviously, Mrs. Bush knew what the agenda was, even if Harrison protests innocence. In fact, I think that the entire interview as filtered through Harrison testifies to Mrs. Bush's good sense. Moreover, Harrison's attempts to convey the First Lady's conversation as transcription within the context of a composed article reveal her aims. She seeks implicitly to arraign Mrs. Bush as yet another purveyor of Bushspeak, though in truth few Americans reach the Olympian heights of articulate thought in cogent, compelling syntax when speaking.

Last, Harrison is twice dismayed that the press secretary really doesn't know her boss at all. Why should she? One does not always consort with one's employees. I think that rather than impaling Mrs. Bush upon the stake of prejudgment, what the essay demonstrates is the clear and necessary distinction between public and private lives, and that people, both members of the press and First Ladies, ignore it to their peril.

LAURA DABUNDO
Marietta, Georgia

Yale again

To the editors:

What a pleasant surprise to open up TNR and see our words immortalized in the (Hillary) Clinton Suck-Up Watch (Notebook, November 9). You left the mistaken impression, however, that the pamphlet distributed before Hillary Rodham Clinton's speech at the Yale Law School Alumni Reunion Weekend was somehow connected to the class of 1972.

It was not. The collection of Clinton's writings was produced by the Yale Law Students for Clinton *et Al*, a *partisan* group. We thought it was about time that people had an opportunity to read about her accomplishments and ideas in her own words, not those of the fringe right. Besides, if we don't suck up, who will?

SUBODH CHANDRA
New Haven, Connecticut

Post-election returns

To the editors:

"We are living ... in the ruins of liberalism and conservatism," writes Leon Wieseltier (Washington Diarist, "Hip-Hope," November 16). But I wish liberals would realize that a good many conservatives—3 million by one ultraconservative estimate, a significant minority—believe conservatism hasn't failed because it hasn't been tried. The defeat of George Bush, who had been stifling the livelier conservatives, gives us more room to offer truly conservative options. The last Democrat to retire as a successful, unrepudiated president was James K. Polk. If Clinton becomes the next Carter, any number of conservative hopefuls will be ready to be the next Reagan.

We will bury you.

ANDREW LOHR
Lookout Mountain, Georgia

To the editors:

The election is over. Stop dumping on Perot and, by implication, portraying the millions of people who voted for him as crypto-fascist dupes. As the Boss himself wrote, "We have to get along. Nobody is going anywhere." Perot displayed more graciousness and generosity of spirit in defeat than you have in gloating over the victory of the man you supported.

JOHN CUSHING
Washington, D.C.

Credit rating

To the editors:

According to James J. Cramer's attack on the credit card industry ("Card Sharks," October 26), America's taxpayers have "almost nothing" to show for the fact that the banking industry has recovered from its troubles and is in pretty good health. Nothing except not having to fund a multibillion-dollar bailout like the S&L's. Nor does he seem to learn from experience. When President Carter implemented short-term credit controls, he initiated a recession. And when President Bush's off-hand remarks resulted in the D'Amato credit card rate cap amendment, it triggered a significant stock market crash. Surely those events caution us not to go down the same misguided path again.

Now Cramer wants the government to slap on a 9 percent credit card interest ceiling, trumping even D'Amato's 14 percent proposal. According to him, "Banks would still make a healthy profit, and consumers would save roughly $17 billion a year." In actuality, the banking industry's profits on credit cards have been declining since 1990, and their net after-tax income on cards will probably total approximately $2.0 billion in 1992. Subtract $17 billion from this figure and you get -$15.0 billion. Hard to see any profit there. Cramer posits that credit cards "carry a stunning average rate of 18.2 percent—fully 15 percent above what it costs a bank to borrow." The real spread in credit cards, which *don't* get funded by low-rate passbook savings, is just under 3 percent, after subtracting cost of funds, operating expenses, and charge-offs. And, as anyone watching T.V. or reading newspapers knows, the card business has never been more competitive, including major new entrants offering low rates and additional incentives to snare market share.

PHILIP S. CORWIN
American Bankers Association
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

James J. Cramer points out that, with Federal Reserve short-term interest rates set at 3 percent, the 18.2 percent average interest rate on credit cards is "15 percent above what it costs a bank to borrow." Actually, the 18.2 percent average is fifteen *percentage points* above what it costs a bank to borrow, and this jaw-dropping margin is more than 500 percent above the bank's cost.

SCOTT MICHAEL HARE
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Malicious motivations

To the editors:

Although there is no doubt that Laurence Tribe and Charles Schumer have the best intentions in supporting H.R. 4797, their defense of the measure is not convincing (Correspondence, November 2). I find it particularly ironic that Tribe would try to draw a distinction between this bill and the flag-burning amendment. Of course there is a great degree of difference between setting fire to the flag to protest the government and knocking an individual into next week because he or she is African American or Jewish; the latter is intuitively worse. But my understanding of H.R. 4797 is that it creates a new crime based on motivation rather than simply codifying sentencing procedures as Tribe implies. That is similar to the flag-burning legislation that ostensibly punished action but in fact punished intent.

The principles of our legal system are unmistakably clear: an individual is

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judged on an action. If the person is found guilty, *then* he or she can be sentenced according to various factors, including if the attack was racially motivated. Guilt should only be determined by malicious actions, not malicious motivations. To do otherwise is to put the cart before the horse, and set the precedent for other legislation that bases guilt or innocence on thoughts and ideas.

MIKE MCVICKER
Washington, D.C.

Magic touch

To the editors:

Your Notebook item on Magic Johnson's resignation from the National Commission on AIDS (October 26) displays a dismal ignorance of the issues surrounding his departure.

Your claim that Johnson attended only one commission meeting is wrong; he actually attended two. But a truly scandalous record belongs to Dr. Louis Sullivan, secretary of health and human services. Sullivan, who also sits on the commission, has attended only one out of the more than two dozen meetings held since the commission was formed in 1989. Sullivan heads the agency directly responsible for the government's response to the AIDS crisis and should consider attending these meetings a crucial part of his job. His neglect of his duties is inexcusable.

Further, Johnson's poor attendance in no way diminishes the weight of his criticisms. He has written a book to help educate people, especially youth, about HIV and AIDS. And he realized that there are better ways to use his time than sitting on a commission whose recommendations are ignored by the people for whom they are intended. Last September the commission issued thirty recommendations on how the government should respond to the AIDS crisis. Not one of these has been implemented.

ANDREW R. LEAVITT
Portland, Oregon

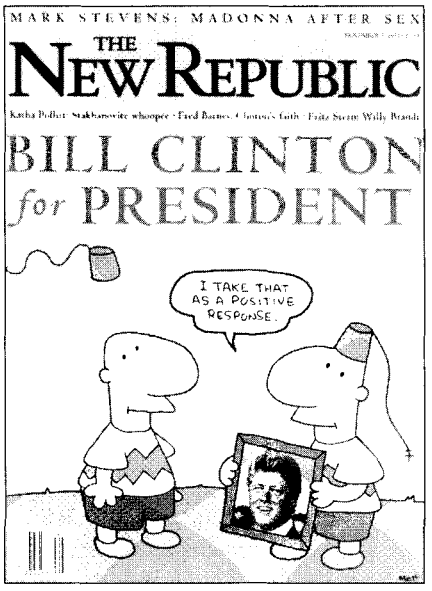
ANC no evil

To the editors:

In response to Hermann Giliomee's "Mandela's Mess" (October 19), it is difficult to comprehend how anyone could describe the recent carnage in Bisho, Ciskei—indeed, all the carnage that has taken place since the release of Nelson Mandela and the legalizing of the ANC in February 1990—as being created by Mandela and the ANC. The de Klerk regime was convinced that the ANC would not be able to integrate its constituencies and leadership—coming from diverse experiences internally, on Robben Island, and in exile—and, hoping to take advantage of the situation, launched a campaign to disrupt life in the townships and throughout Natal in order to turn the people against the ANC.

KwaZulu, Ciskei, and all homelands are creations of grand apartheid, with terrorist armies that are organized and administrated by the South African Defense Forces and the Department of Military Intelligence. As such, one is hard put to understand what right they have to take part in CODESA. The Bisho march was to show the world that the puppet leaders of these phony states have no mandate. It is Orwellian to suggest that mass action necessitates violence and intimidation and hurts the cause of democracy.

In saying that the ANC is a Xhosa organization, Giliomee simply ignores the historical record of the ANC. If there is any organization sensitive to the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the South African people, it is the ANC. When it was formed, the ANC adopted two national anthems, in Nguni and Sotho. It also adopted its own flag. How can Giliomee refer to the government's flag as a national symbol? The only dispute settled in 1926 was what the *white* flag of South Africa would consist of. South Africa has no national symbols, only symbols of the oppressor and the oppressed.



BEN MAGUBANE
JOSEPH REILLY
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Connecticut

The source

To the editors:

Richard Pipes, in reviewing Georgi Arbatov's book, is entitled to his opinions, but one fact he has badly wrong ("The Toady," October 19). In blaming Arbatov for being "the source" that Yuri Andropov was really a "closet liberal," Pipes has the wrong target.

Andrei Sakharov surely knew something about Andropov, yet credited Andropov, not Gorbachev, for being the father of Soviet reforms. During a meeting at Stanford in the summer of 1989, a few months before Sakharov died and shortly after his clash with Gorbachev at the first meeting of the Soviet Congress, I heard Sakharov and Yelena Bonner praise Andropov and speculate on how things might have improved in the Soviet Union had he lived.

If Pipes won't accept Arbatov as a credible source, will he accept Sakharov and Bonner?

JAMES O. GOLDSBOROUGH
San Diego, California

Richard Pipes replies:

Having read Mr. Goldsborough's letter, I contacted Tanya Yankelevich, Sakharov's stepdaughter, who accompanied Sakharov and Yelena Bonner to California in 1989. She angrily denied that either her mother or stepfather, victims of the KGB, had "praised" its chief, Andropov. But then, according to her, the Sakharovs visited not Stanford but Berkeley, so perhaps Mr. Goldsborough confused them with some other Russian visitors.

Stunned

To the editors:

I am stunned that in this day and age a magazine of your quality can swallow the figure of 700,000 Serbs allegedly killed by the Croats in World War II ("Let Them Sink" by Ronald Steel, November 2). An official Yugoslav survey of World War II victims lists a total of 346,840 Serbian fatalities for the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia. Other reliable researchers (Kocovic, Zerjavic) have independently reached similar conclusions.

Steel's article is a shameful and transparent excuse for the genocide of non-Serbian people of the former Yugoslavia. And if he thinks that Serbia is no menace to world peace, let him wait until the pending Kosovo explosion ignites Albania, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, etc.

VLADIMIR P. GOSS
Hillsborough, North Carolina

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FROM WASHINGTON

Between Bork and Roe

On most aspects of public policy, Bill Clinton and others have done a great job of "repositioning"—as they say in the ad biz—the Democratic Party. On foreign policy, the party is no longer perceived as a bunch of weak-kneed appeasers eager to devastate America's military strength. On domestic policy, the party has shaken off its image as suffering a mindless propensity to "tax and spend." Both these images were partly valid and partly fantasies of enemy propaganda. Skeptics would say that the new reform image derives from a similar combination of reality and agitprop. Be that as it may, the party has changed.

There is one area, though, in which Democratic Party thinking has not changed much in either reality or perception. That is its attitude toward judges and the proper use of the Constitution. Clinton's victory has been widely celebrated as an opportunity to return to the golden age of the Warren Court. In particular, it has been greeted with a sigh of relief about the constitutional right to choose abortion: "*Roe* v. *Wade* is safe."

It has been twenty-five years since a Democrat was able to appoint a Supreme Court justice. Clinton will probably get at least two and maybe even four in his first term, along with up to a third of the seats on lower courts. George Bush used court appointments as a sop to the right. It would be a shame if Clinton used them as a sop to the unreconstructed left. As a former law professor himself, he should use his court appointments to finish the job of reinventing liberal politics.

The essential first step is passage of the Freedom of Choice Act. That is a bill, already before Congress, intended to create a legal right to abortion roughly the same as that guaranteed by *Roe* before the Court started pruning it back in 1989. Although there will be many quarrels about the details, there is a clear majority in both houses of Congress for a law of this sort. A clear majority of the public supports it too.

Once abortion rights are guaranteed by national legislation, the hysterical embrace of *Roe* should no longer be necessary—though it will take some effort to persuade many pro-choice activists of this. Among constitutional scholars, most of whom are probably liberal and pro-choice, it is a truth almost universally acknowledged that *Roe* v. *Wade* was a bad decision. Dividing pregnancy into trimesters with different rules for each may be a sensible approach to abortion policy, but there is nothing about trimesters in the Constitution. Alternative theories of a constitutional right to abortion—abandoning *Roe*'s reasoning while retaining the result—have emerged since 1973, but they all have an air of desperation.

And who needs them anymore? For almost the entire *Roe* era, Republican presidents made pro-choice legislation an impossibility. Once a choice law is on the books, however, it would require anti-choice majorities in both houses of Congress plus an anti-choice president to repeal the guarantee. (Or two-thirds anti-choice majorities in both houses, which is even less likely.) In a way, abortion rights are more secure when guaranteed by legislation than when they are "in the Constitution" by judicial fiat. As Reagan and Bush learned, even your own appointed judges can't always be counted on.

National legislation could secure abortion rights in a deeper way: by grounding them in a consensus of the citizenry. Enacting the Freedom of Choice law will involve debate and compromise over matters such as parental notification, a waiting period, late abortions, and so on. Polls show that most people favor choice, but want some restrictions of this sort. Yet no court can convincingly derive rulings on such details—either thumbs up or thumbs down—from the Constitution. Only the democratic process of give and take can produce an abortion regime that will satisfy the most people and—more important—resign the remainder to the result.

A democratically enacted choice law might even get abortion off the national agenda. That is something many partisans on both sides of the headachy debate devoutly wish, and something a supposedly immutable Supreme Court ruling has spectacularly failed to achieve.

Clinton supports the Freedom of Choice Act, of course. But he also, unfortunately, pledged during the campaign to appoint Supreme Court justices who support "a woman's right to choose." The pledge took several forms, not all of which specifically mentioned *Roe* v. *Wade*. With a bit of slickness, Clinton might argue that he was fulfilling his pledge by appointing justices who believe in a woman's right to choose, but do not necessarily believe that this right is embedded in the Constitution. That has the merit of being the correct position. And it would still have constitutional bite. Such a standard would exclude potential justices—and there are some—who believe that the Constitution forbids abortion even if the law allows it.

You can reject *Roe* v. *Wade* without rejecting all of the great postwar "activist" Supreme Court jurisprudence. *Roe*, like other supposed Warren Court excesses, came during the Warren Burger era (and was written by a Nixon nominee). Some liberals have wondered if *Roe* wasn't actually a conservative dirty trick. It certainly had two nefarious effects, from the liberal point of view.

First, because of its own overreaching, *Roe* tainted other, worthier, precedents of the activist era. It helped to create the impression that there is no solid intellectual ground between a judicial free-for-all and the constitutional nihilism of a Robert Bork. That's just not true.

Second, politically, *Roe* made the left complacent while energizing the right. The right-to-life movement, born out of *Roe*, was central to the growth of the social-issues conservatism that was such a powerful element in Republican successes of the past two decades.

The Supreme Court's partial reversal of *Roe* in the *Webster* case (1989) partly reversed the politics of social issues as well, and helped to elect Bill Clinton. The possibility of losing abortion rights brought millions of women (and men) back into the Democratic fold. The Republicans' extreme anti-abortion position highlighted, and turned voters against, their intolerance on other social issues as well.

By 1992 both sides of the abortion debate recognized the power of negative Supreme Court decisions to energize their followers. When the mixed-result *Casey* decision came down last June, abortion rights groups and right-to-life groups frantically faxed rival analyses to news organizations, all claiming that the ruling was a stunning defeat for their own team.

Clinton's rethinking of traditional Democratic positions on economic issues hasn't just meant moving closer to the center on some simple-minded two-dimensional political spectrum. Clinton favors some new forms of government activism, as well as rejection of some of the old forms.

Similarly, a rethinking of the Democratic judicial philosophy should involve something more than a rejection of a few old activist precedents. Clearing away mistakes and excesses like *Roe* could create a new basis of legitimacy, not just for the surviving precedents of the last activist era, but for new precedents of the next one.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 7, 1992

ENDING THE BAN

The debate about allowing gay men and women to serve their country has now happily been reduced to a question of pragmatism. Candidate Bill Clinton made a clear commitment to end the ban by executive order upon assuming the presidency. He is now president-elect. It is a remarkable sign of the tenacity of prejudice that he should now have to explain himself again or that his commitment might be deemed negotiable. Any abrogation of the promise would be damaging both to the credibility of the election process and to the clear authority of civilian government over the military.

Nevertheless, the step is a difficult and painful one. It will not be without human cost, and it may even entail considerable psychological upheaval in the ranks. Because of this, the tough issues of gay-straight relationships must be discussed openly and frankly. There is no space for the blandishments of political correctness in the military. There is only the reality of working effectively together.

The case against ending the ban nevertheless remains extremely weak. The security risk point was dismissed by the military years ago, in its own internal reports. The "morale" question is not so simple. David Hackworth, writing in *Newsweek*, argues that the kind of mutual trust required of fellow soldiers in situations that threaten their lives is incompatible with openly gay people being among the ranks of combatants. This, of course, is exactly the argument made against integrating races, and, like that case at the time, has an element of truth. But the largely successful integration of minorities shows how fears can be overcome. Racism was undermined by human experience. So, we believe, will fear of homosexuals. These deep phobias are conquered finally not by argument or education but by the human beings who confront them and deal honestly with them. The thousands of gay men and women in the military who already work with their straight colleagues and have their respect and admiration will by themselves be the strongest force to accomplish this. Unlike blacks thirty years ago, they are already integrated; they have records and histories. If and when they are allowed to end their crippling secrecy (and many may choose not to), they will cause a thousand bigotries to crumple.

The difficulty of gays' living intimately with those who might be the focus of sexual attraction is, we believe, overrated. The old stereotype of communal showers and barracks is the exception in today's military, which by and large, has dorm-room facilities and individual showers. And although on ships and submarines some common living is inevitable, surely grown-up people can adjust. Schools and gyms across the country manage perfectly well. Greater honesty about differences may even defuse sexual tension rather than escalate it. And, of course, any incidents of on-base sexual misconduct should be disciplined as thoroughly among gays as it is among straights.

We don't think these problems will be solved instantly, which is why we worry about ending the ban by a "stroke of the pen." For the sake of gay personnel as well as for their superiors, there must be programs in place to educate and protect, to enforce new rules and procedures before the ban is ended. Our suggestion is that on January 21, 1993, the new president suspend all prosecution of gay people currently in service and announce an end to the ban on gay recruits effective exactly a year later. In the meantime, he should set up a group to decide exactly how best the transition can be accomplished. The only non-negotiable element of the shift should be its end point: full and equal opportunity for gay servicemen and women. This will give the military the time and space to adjust, without compromising the essence of the decision.

The more fundamental question is why bother at all? Our answer is a relatively simple one: gay people are already in the military and they deserve to be spared the appalling ritual of fear, insecurity, and persecution they now endure (see "American Inquisition" by Scott Shuger, page 23). We also believe that the right to serve one's country is as fundamental to the idea of equal citizenship as any right can be. To be denied it because of mere sexual orientation, without any reference to professional conduct, is the clearest example of civil rights deprivation in America today. To be granted that right does not mean an end to the subjugation of homosexuals, but it is the beginning of civil dignity and equal responsibility. It will also, we believe, be as big a boon in the long run to our military's effectiveness as racial integration. We will look back on this moment in a decade's time and wonder not why we did it, but why on earth it took us so long. •

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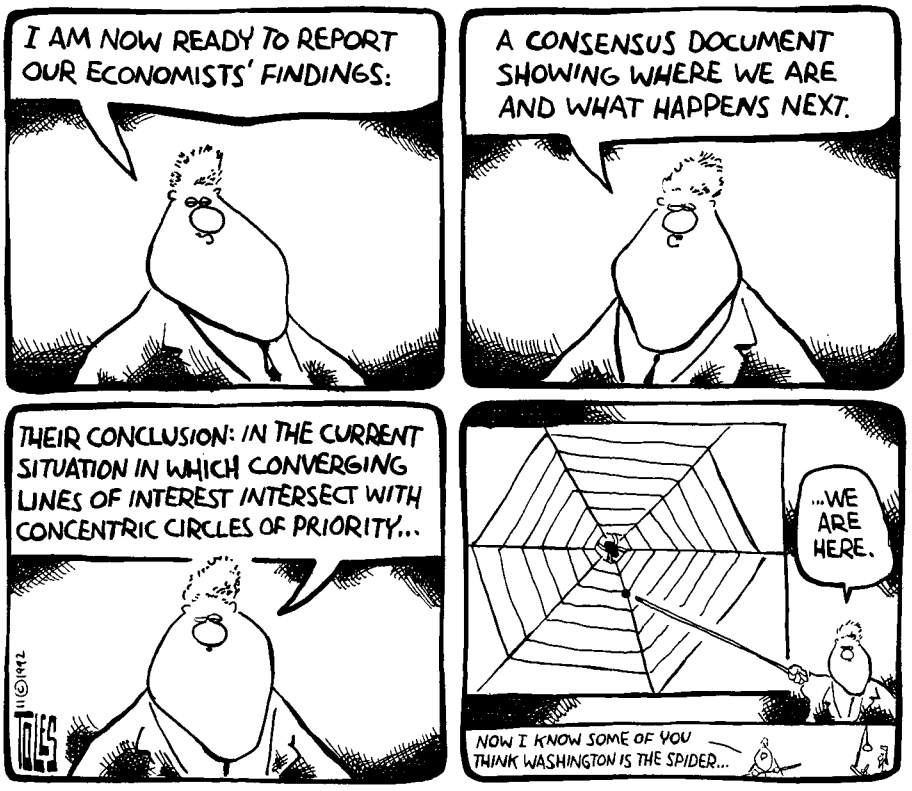
NOTEBOOK

THE ETHICS PRESIDENT: Bill Clinton's attempts to implement ethics requirements for his transition team have already turned into something of a fiasco. First, spokesman George Stephanopolous said the rules didn't apply to transition co-chair Vernon Jordan. Then Jordan agreed to take a six-month leave of absence from his law practice and various corporate boards, including RJR Nabisco's. There's no suggestion that Jordan is showing favoritism toward his corporate clients, but taking a leave hardly takes care of the conflict-of-interest problem, so long as Jordan—and his clients—knows that he will be paid again after a brief cooling-off period. In fact, without infringing on the First Amendment, there are no rules that can eliminate the possibility that someone connected with the administration will peddle his influence later. If Clinton is serious about setting a new ethical tone, he should focus on disclosure. Washington lobbyists now have only to file bare-bones statements about their activities, and there is no real enforcement for the many who fail to comply. Clinton's new regulations should expand what those lobbying on behalf of private clients have to tell us, and prescribe real penalties for those who fail to file. And as president, Clinton should publicly criticize those who abuse service in his administration for personal gain. He can count on shame to do the rest.


I AM NOW READY TO REPORT OUR ECONOMISTS' FINDINGS:
A CONSENSUS DOCUMENT SHOWING WHERE WE ARE AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
THEIR CONCLUSION: IN THE CURRENT SITUATION IN WHICH CONVERGING LINES OF INTEREST INTERSECT WITH CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF PRIORITY...
...WE ARE HERE.
NOW I KNOW SOME OF YOU THINK WASHINGTON IS THE SPIDER...

PATTEN OF DEMOCRACY: Beijing's threat to suspend the 1984 agreement it made with Britain for handing over Hong Kong is the surest sign that the British are at last doing something right. Chris Patten, the colony's new governor, has proposed a modicum of greater democratization before the hand-over of power in 1997: lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 and broadening the voting base for electing the colony's legislature in 1995. These minor measures would help entrench Hong Kong's shallow democratic culture and make it that much harder for the Chinese to renege on their commitment to retain some pluralism once they take over in five years. For the first time, the British have realized that they do have some negotiating leverage over the Chinese, and that the principal element of this is the democratic impulse of the people of Hong Kong. The British should ignore the Chinese bluster. And for his first trip abroad, Bill Clinton could do worse than visit 6 million people who could be the key to the democratization of an entire mainland.

MISSISSIPPI TURNING: A federal judge will rule this week on the Mississippi Board of Higher Education's proposal to close two of its three historically black colleges. This threatens to turn a recent Supreme Court victory for blacks into a perverse defeat. The case began seventeen years ago, when black students filed a discrimination suit against the state of Mississippi, seeking increased funding for the three black colleges. Last June the Supreme Court ruled that aspects of the Mississippi system amount to de jure segregation. (Minimum admissions standards are higher, for example, in the five historically white schools than in the three historically black ones.) Clarence Thomas, in his most measured and convincing opinion of the year, concurred in the judgment, but stressed it should not be interpreted to require the closing of the black schools. "I think it undisputable," Thomas wrote, "that these institutions have succeeded in part because of their distinctive histories and traditions.... It would be ironic, to say the least, if the institutions that sustained blacks during segregation were themselves destroyed in an effort to combat its vestiges." Mississippi has not only ignored Thomas's warning; its proposed remedy would fulfill his worst fears.

SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE: This month's newsletter of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York has the Hon. Sol Wachtler scheduled to give the opening remarks for a panel discussion on December 9. The topic? "Scripts about Women's Lives: Presuppositions that Shape Litigation." •

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CARPER'S INDEX

Sales of Tupperware last year in Lima, Ohio: $890,000
Sales in Lima, Peru: $21.50
Percentage of Americans who think a bagel is a kind of dog: 3
Average amount of wood an American woodchuck can chuck, in cubic feet: 11
Amount a Canadian woodchuck can chuck: 9
Percentage of articles in an average issue of *Harper's* that have previously appeared elsewhere: 65
Percentage of articles in an average issue of *Reader's Digest* that have previously appeared elsewhere: 55
Number of lentils in a bag of dried lentils, on average: 4,832
Number of calls received by the White House after Bush's defeat: 233
Number of calls received by the White House after the Gettysburg Address: 0
Change, since the election, in the percentage of illegal aliens who say they suffer from headaches: -5
Number of topless doughnut shops now operating in Broward County, Florida: 1
Price of a glazed doughnut in Moscow, in rubles: 14,000
Percentage of caged rats that developed leukemia after watching Pat Buchanan's Republican convention speech: 19
Percentage that developed leukemia after being read 'Pat the Bunny': 2
Percentage of residents of Tupelo, Mississippi, who do not have air conditioners but say they wish they did: 32
Percentage of residents of Tupelo, Mississippi, who have air conditioners but say they wish they didn't: 6
Date in November that is the birthday of Jerry Lewis: 14
Chances that a dapple-leafed maple in Washington state will live past the age of 8: 1 in 450
Increase, since 1973, in number of Americans who cannot correctly identify the day, month, or year: +11
Percentage change in number of Taiwanese businessmen with advanced degrees, 1980-86: +3.4
Percentage of readers who find that fact vaguely interesting: .07
Number of letters in George Stephanopoulos's last name: 14
Chances that an ostrich has an eating disorder: 1 in 11
Number of gunshots fired in the film *Terminator 2*: 3,258
Number fired in *The Rescuers*: 11
Number fired in an average night in the Bronx's 11th Precinct: 98
Average number of hours of television watched by an American fourth-grader, daily: 11
Average number watched by a Saudi teenager: .005
Average life expectancy of an asbestos miner, in years: 57
Current age of Ronald Reagan: 81
Year that air quality index in Ventura County is expected to reach levels in Nome, Alaska: 2036
Year President Nixon resigned: 1974
Average annual government expenditure on embossing invitations to State Department dinners: $400,000
Average annual government expenditure on polio vaccines for minority children: $380,000
Percentage of statistics on this page that are numbingly obvious: 61
Percentage that are naggingly polemical: 39
Percentage of Americans who say Public Television should be abolished: 90
Percentage who have sexual fantasies about David Gergen: 6
Number of people in Louisiana who voted for David Duke last year: 542,344
Percentage who read *Harper's*: 0
Number of times a year Susan Sontag says she cooks dinner at home: 2
What she cooks: pasta
Percent increase in contempt of *Harper's* editors for most Americans, daily: +17
Chances that you are still reading this: 1 in 850,000

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Why the Republicans weren't robbed.

No surprise

By Simon Lazarus

In a November 9 letter to Lawrence Walsh, Senator Bob Dole accused the Iran-contra independent counsel of an act of sabotage. Just four days before the election, in Walsh's second indictment of former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, he had included material placing George Bush at a January 7, 1986, White House arms-for-hostages meeting. "Politics" drove "the timing of the indictment," Dole fumed. It's a nice theory. But it has no more merit than the claim that as vice president, Bush was "out of the loop" on Iran-contra.

In fact, Walsh's office first disclosed Bush's presence at this meeting on June 16, 1992, in the initial indictment: Weinberger was "at the White House with President Reagan, Vice President George Bush, Attorney General Edwin Meese, III, Director Casey, and Secretary Shultz. At the meeting, the president favored the plan to sell missiles to Iran, through Israel, in exchange for the release of American hostages." The indictment specified that the 1,700 pages of notes Weinberger withheld contained a summary of this meeting and others.

But the press failed to report the information about Bush. Instead news reports focused on other material in the indictment, especially gossip in Weinberger's notes that Nancy Reagan wanted him to replace Secretary of State George Shultz, whom she felt had made too public his disagreement with Reagan over the arms-for-hostages plan. The Bush campaign either failed to review the indictment or overlooked the significance of Bush's presence at the January 1986 meeting. This is odd, especially since the June indictment was pre-reviewed by the Justice Department, the CIA, and the National Security Council—routine procedure to prevent the inadvertent release of classified information. What's more, on October 9 Walsh announced in open court his intention of filing a new indictment before the end of the month. If the Bush team had been following the case, they could have anticipated the redisclosure of the meeting.

Dole made much of the fact that the attorney who will try the case, James Brosnahan, is a registered Democrat who made a $500 contribution to the Clinton campaign. Yet Brosnahan, a San Francisco lawyer, did not join the prosecution team until October 15, six days after Walsh's announcement to the court about when he would file the new indictment. The end-of-October deadline was set not by politics but by the exigencies of a big case on a fast track to trial on January 5, 1993. The judge had ordered Walsh to turn over to the defense, before November 2, key documents related to the charges against Weinberger.

Why did the new indictment include verbatim quotations from Weinberger's notes on the January 1986 meeting attended by Bush, rather than the paraphrased summary in the first indictment? Walsh was responding to a defense motion to strike from the indictment most of the introduction, comprising eight pages and twenty-seven numbered paragraphs. In an effort to underscore the relevance of the challenged provisions, in the new indictment Walsh added fourteen direct references from Weinberger's notes, not only regarding the January 7, 1986, meeting with Bush but covering *all* the numerous Iran-contra-related contacts, meetings, and observations referenced in the introductory section of the complaint. Thus in place of the original paraphrase, the new indictment quoted Weinberger's notes directly: "Met with President, Shultz, Poindexter, Bill Casey, Ed Meese, in Oval Office. President decided to go with Israeli-Iranian offer to release our 5 hostages in return for sale of 4000 TOWs to Iran by Israel—George Shultz + I opposed—Bill Casey, Ed Meese + VP favored—as did Poindexter." Whether or not Walsh persuades the court to leave his introduction intact, it is clear that he beefed up his indictment to help win his case against Weinberger, not to help Clinton win the election.

It would be a delicious irony if Bush's defeat could be laid at Walsh's door. The Reagan and Bush administrations, along with their allies in Congress and their appointees on the federal bench, have waged an unrelenting—and quite successful—war to undermine the institution of the independent counsel and the Iran-contra investigation in particular. Indeed, the second Weinberger indictment resulted from one of the bolder offensives of that war: Reagan D.C. Appeals Court appointee Douglas Ginsburg's November 1991 reversal of former NSC chief John Poindexter's Iran-contra conviction. Ginsburg held that although Poindexter had been found to have lied to Congress, lying was not intended to have been covered by the statute banning obstruction of congressional investigations. On September 29, 1992, this tortured precedent led the District Court handling the Weinberger case to dismiss part of Walsh's indictment, thereby forcing him to file his revised version a month later.

It is hardly surprising the Bush administration suspects treachery in Walsh's action. After all, Bush's own attorney general withheld until after the election the release of the October 27 recommendation of its special counsel in the "Iraqgate" affair, that the matter involved "sufficiently specific and credible evidence of criminal wrongdoing" to warrant the appointment of an independent counsel. But though Walsh is a convenient scapegoat, he was just doing his job. On Iran-contra as with other problem issues, the president and his aides chose to look the other way until it was too late to save themselves.

SIMON LAZARUS is a Washington lawyer who worked on President Carter's White House staff.

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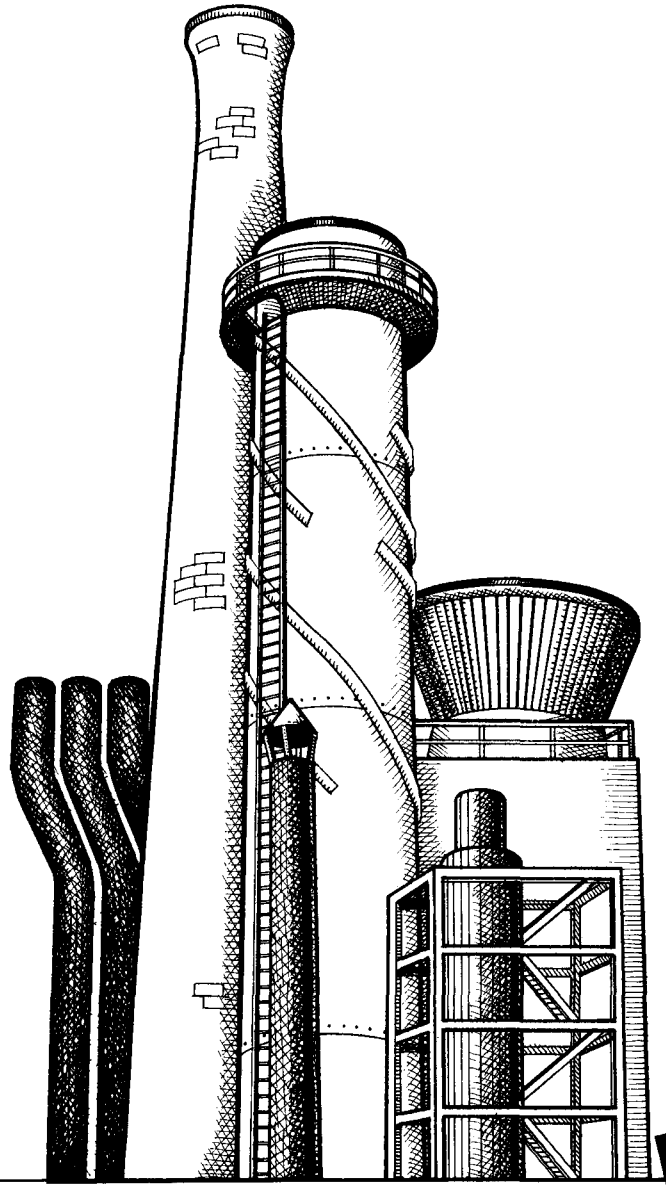

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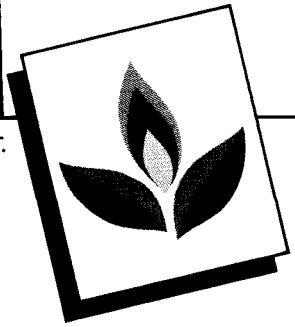

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THE PRESS

BACK CHANNELS

By Gary J. Bass

"People ... use you as a kind of channel," says Ori Nir, an Israeli reporter covering the Middle East peace talks for the leading daily *Ha'Aretz*. Nir says he's been approached by members of the Arab delegations and "told things that I thought were said to me so I'd mention it to the other side." Mohammed Wahby, an Egyptian reporter writing on the talks for *Al-Musawar*, a semiofficial Egyptian weekly, says members of the Israeli delegation have given him grist for his stories. "It's normal practice," he says.

Nir and Wahby aren't alone. As the Arab-Israeli peace talks enter their second year, the reporters in the Middle Eastern press pool covering the ongoing round in Washington have increasingly become part of the story. In an effort to smooth the negotiating process, the Arab and Israeli delegations have begun to use the press as a diplomatic back channel to sound each other out. Of course, attempting to manipulate the other side's press into favorably reporting your side is nothing new in international diplomacy. But never before have the media been so overtly courted in Mideast talks.

The Palestinian delegation, for example, produces special press packets and holds briefings, lunches, and coffee breaks exclusively for Israeli journalists. This September the Palestinians held an Israelis-only breakfast briefing, hinting that there would be a surprise speaker. The reporters who attended were greeted by Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi—and Nabil Shaath of the PLO. The breakfast was a shrewd maneuver for the Palestinians, who recognized that television images of Israeli journalists interviewing PLO officials, who are excluded from the formal peace process, would enhance the PLO's credibility as a de facto participant in the talks.

The Jordanians have also turned press-friendly. Spokesman Marwan Muasher is generally well regarded among Israeli journalists. Even Syria, which as recently as this spring barred Israeli reporters from press conferences and shunned requests for interviews, has begun to warm slightly to the Israeli media. After criticism in the Western and even the Arab press, Syria opened its press briefings to Israelis.

Still, the Syrians are extremely wary. Syrian spokeswoman Bushra Kanafani will talk with Israelis if they're with groups of other non-Israelis, but one-on-one Israeli interviews with Syrian officials are strictly taboo. With the exception of the handful of reporters from state news agencies, Syria doesn't have journalists at the talks. And you won't find Syrian camera crews hanging around either. Unlike the Jordanians, the Syrian government is loath to broadcast pictures of Israelis and Syrians in the same room.

The Israelis also accommodate the Arab press when it suits their purposes. At the Madrid round in October 1991, then Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a press conference exclusively for the Arab press. Since then, according to one Lebanese journalist, there has been "a concerted effort to approach the Arab media." Press releases and transcripts of speeches by Israeli officials are issued in Arabic, and off-record briefings are held for the Arab press, sometimes in Arabic. Yosef Hadass, director-general of the Israeli foreign ministry, took Hamdi Fouad of Egypt's semiofficial daily *Al-Ahram* out for lunch and spin. And Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was recently interviewed in *The Saudi Gazette*. According to Israeli Embassy spokeswoman Ruth Yaron, Israel has "a specific awareness" of the Arab press. "The media can play an important role in delivering messages to the masses back home," she says.

Away from the negotiating room, the close working conditions and long hours have turned the press pool into an odd social laboratory where Arabs and Israelis mix, many for the first time. Reporters hang out together at briefings, speeches, and State Department stakeouts, gossiping and swapping information and sources. "It's no big deal," says *The Jerusalem Post*'s Allison Kaplan. "You're sitting in the same hotel, you go for coffee." Mohamad Hakki, a reporter for the Saudi daily *Okaz*, says such informality has given the Israelis a chance to see that not all Arab journalists are government hacks. "They learn that the quality of Arab journalists now is much better than the hairdresser who took the job twenty years ago."

Even so, some Israelis say that at times it is hard to accept their Arab colleagues as serious, fair-minded journalists. Among the Palestinian press corps, "There often isn't a clear dividing line between the press and political activists," says *Ha'Aretz*'s Nir. For example, Hanna Siniora, editor of the influential pro-Fatah east Jerusalem paper *Al-Fajr*, is also one of the most prominent Palestinian leaders on the West Bank. "You'd rarely find a Palestinian reporter who isn't politically involved," says Nir, whose beat before coming to Washington was the West Bank and Gaza. Arab journalists, in turn, "truly believe—and in some cases it's true—that those who represent Israeli T.V. or Israeli radio are .. part of the establishment," says Eldad Beck of Israeli army radio. The Arabs, he says, suspect "that [Israeli reporters] would not do this or that without getting permission from higher-ups."

Coffee breaks and informal schmoozing aside, in this intensely political atmosphere few Middle Eastern journalists forget the issues that brought them here. "There is no real friendship," *Al-Ahram*'s Fouad says. "There is nothing in common when it comes to occupation and

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territory and Palestine. So I feel unhappy to talk to some Israeli journalists." Even those Arabs and Israelis who are genuinely friendly with each other have their limits. Recently an Israeli journalist threw a party for Israeli, American, Jordanian, and Palestinian reporters. The party was a success until some members of the Israeli delegation were about to show up. At that point, a number of the Arabs left. Hanging out with reporters was one thing. Partying with the Israeli establishment, they said, was going too far. •

The trouble with Harry.

MISCONCEPTION

By Jim Holt

Now that the French abortion pill RU-486 has been shown to be highly effective in preventing pregnancies when taken a day or two after unprotected sexual intercourse, American opponents of the pill can be heard arguing that this "morning-after" method is morally equivalent to abortion. What difference does it make, they ask, whether the fertilized egg is destroyed before it implants itself in the uterus (morning-after) or subsequent to implantation (abortion)? "The issue remains the moral status of the fetus from the moment of conception, when a unique genetic identity is created," as George Weigel, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a spokesman for the anti-RU486 side, put it.

But is the creation of a "unique genetic identity" tantamount to the creation of a person endowed with the full complement of rights, including the right to life? Certainly there is no one-to-one relationship between genetic and personal identity. Identical twins have exactly the same genetic makeup, yet they are not the same person.

This simple point suggests a thought experiment. Suppose that pro-lifers are correct in believing that the cell formed by the union of a human sperm and egg is a person. Fixing a particular case in mind, let us call this person "Harry" and follow his development.

Around twenty-four hours after he is conceived, Harry divides into two cells. A day later he comprises four cells. The process of division continues. In five days Harry is a spherical cluster of thirty-two cells called a morula—Latin for "little mulberry," which is what he rather resembles. By this point Harry has descended through the fallopian tube and reached the uterus.

Now, in the case we are imagining something remarkable happens: the cell cluster that is Harry splits into two identical parts. Each burrows into the uterine wall and goes on to develop into a fetus with a functioning brain, a beating heart, and so on. Nine months after conception, Harry's mother gives birth to identical twins, whom she calls "Hal" and "Hank." This raises a question: What happened to Harry?

Logically there are three possibilities. The first is that both Hal and Hank are really Harry. But if Hal equals Harry equals Hank, then Hal must be Hank. This is absurd: identical twins, as already noted, are in no sense the same person.

The second possibility is that Harry continues to exist beyond the moment of twinning as one, but not the other, of the twins—say, Hal. But this will not do either. Hank has an equally good claim to being the original as Hal does. Owing to the nature of mitotic cell division, Hank incorporates just as much of Harry's original DNA as Hal does. Moreover, he dates his independent existence from precisely the same instant as Hal.

The only remaining possibility is that Harry is neither Hal nor Hank. But this means he must have expired just five days after his conception—which, again, is absurd. When a mother gives birth to twins, she does not mourn the original child or pray that his soul be released from limbo.

The upshot of this straightforward bit of reasoning is that, when twinning occurs, it is nonsensical to regard the conceptus as a person. To be sure, identical twinning is a relatively rare thing, occurring roughly once every ninety maternities. What about the other cases? Is it reasonable to speak of a fertilized egg as a person coming into existence at conception when twinning does not take place?

The answer is no. Whether a fertilized egg will eventually become one person, twins, triplets, or quadruplets depends on its environment, not on any intrinsic features it possesses. (The likelihood of identical twinning, unlike fraternal twinning, is not affected by hereditary factors.) Embryological studies of certain animals suggest that within the mother's body, fissioning of the embryo may be triggered by conditions that arrest development, such as a temporary lack of oxygen. If the egg has been fertilized in a laboratory petri dish, all one has to do is separate off one of the cells of the resulting morula—each is a virtual human being.

Twinning can take place up to the fourteenth day after conception, when the "primitive streak"—a piling up of cells at one end of the embryonic disc—appears. Until this point, the embryo lacks any property that would make it one definite human being. In Aristotle's terms, it lacks a *soul*. It is not a person, but the source of an indeterminate number of potential persons, much like a collection of sperm and eggs.

The implication for RU486 should be obvious. When used as a morning-after pill, it is morally no different from the old-fashioned contraceptive pill, which prevents fertilization of the egg. Both pills do their work before anything that can be said to be a person comes into the picture. Of course, if RU486 is eventually marketed in the United States, it will also be used as an abortion pill, ter-

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minating pregnancies as late as a couple of months after conception. And that is a stickier moral matter.

JIM HOLT is a New York writer.

A school choice fairy tale.

HYPING DISTRICT 4

By Billy Tashman

The public desperately wants to believe in East Harlem's School District 4, the mythical mother of School Choice. A miracle supposedly occurred there eighteen years ago after administrators encouraged teachers to start their own schools and let junior high students choose the ones they wanted to attend. By the early 1980s the kids of District 4 had abandoned their huge junior highs, which were eventually shut down. They couldn't compete with the newer, smaller schools whose kids, according to legend, had spectacular reading scores, near-perfect high school graduation records, and a galaxy of other achievements.

Before long, District 4 was being routinely cited as the foremost example of what choice can accomplish, even in the most benighted school districts. This year politicians and policy-makers in forty states are debating or legislating choice as the cure for their schools' ills, and nine are considering bills based on the District 4 model. In mid-September New York City adopted a choice system for all of its districts.

Having recently taught for five years in District 4, I am amazed by the hype. I would read the same distorted claims about reading scores and high school graduation rates repeated by reporters and wonder if any of them had actually visited classrooms in the district. What's worse, while exaggerating the meager successes of District 4, they have ignored some central facts: that the district's schools choose the kids as much as the other way around; that reading scores may have gone up, fueled by kids recruited from outside the district, but there's no evidence that general academic ability has improved; and that though students are attending more regularly, this is due less to choice than to the creation of small schools with a lot of autonomy—places that have improved students' lives a little bit.

The press hype begins in statistics. Few reporters actually queried the figures District 4 officials fed them. For example, *Catalyst*, a Chicago magazine that covers school reform, claimed in April 1992 that 84 percent of District 4's students were graduating from high school. It was astonishing by any standard. Unfortunately, it wasn't true. I kept track of the kids who graduated from the junior high school where I taught. Every month, it seemed, I heard about another pregnancy, another dropout. Certainly, few of them made it to college.

So where did this number come from? The source for the *Catalyst* story was a widely discussed study of District 4 by Mary James, a public interest attorney. James says she got her information from District 4's head of alternative schools, John Falco (who denies it). She says Falco was also the source for other figures that don't hold up, each of which she enthusiastically embellished. For example, "The teacher daily attendance rate," she wrote, "at times reached 100 percent. Teachers were reluctant to have substitutes tinker with *their* programs." In my school—and all the others I knew of—there were plenty of teacher absences. The district just never counted them. James also wrote that the district "has never been a budget buster." According to a recent Carnegie Commission report, District 4 received more federal funding per pupil than any other district in the country, thanks to its aggressive pursuit of money available for minority schools that attract white students. When I taught there, it was notorious for overspending its budget every single year.

James's study was only a drop in an ever expanding pool of ink. Journalists have tended to rely on the same two sources for their stories—Falco and his predecessor, Seymour Fleigel, rather than visiting the schools or examining the statistics themselves. Speaking on a segment of the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," Fleigel repeated what by now is the District 4 mantra: in 1972, he said, "of the thirty-two school districts in New York City [District 4] ranked thirty-second in reading and mathematics.... We are now moving between sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth in the city. Fifteen percent of the kids in this district read at or above grade level in 1972. We are now up to 64 percent." The same startling numbers appear in virtually every story about the district. David Osborne repeated them in *The Washington Post* in 1990, and then two years later, almost word for word in *The New York Times* (which has run nearly sixty stories on District 4). The numbers appeared in John Chubb and Terry Moe's *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, the bible of the choice movement. Ex-Xerox chief (and now assistant education secretary) David Kearns got the scores from a *Fortune* story and put them in his book, *Winning the Brain Race*. Both former *Times* education writer Edward Fiske and Steven F. Wilson of the Pioneer Institute include the scores in their recent books as well. Wilson's source was a chapter from *Public Schools by Choice*, a book edited by Joe Nathan, a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The author of the chapter was none other than Fleigel, who cobbled it together from a file of what might be called "choice's greatest clippings," including sourcing from Falco.

All of these writers failed to mention that the 64 percent reading rate was below New York's citywide average. Nor do any of them point out that District 4's scores plunged to 38 percent after the reading test was adjusted to national averages. (Before that, they had been inflated by the repeated use of a test that became familiar to the students taking it.) This year the district

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U.S. Colleges: Best by What Standards?

By Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers

It's time to debunk one of the enduring myths about American education: that while our elementary and secondary schools are generally lousy, our colleges and universities are the best in the world.

The reason usually given to explain this supposed difference in quality is that colleges are subject to competition and choice while elementary and secondary schools are not. We've been hearing this from President Bush, Education Secretary Lamar Alexander, former Yale University president Benno Schmidt, who is now promoting a chain of for-profit schools, and right-wing economist Walter Williams, among others.

But where's the proof that our postsecondary schools are the best in the world? Some point to colleges and universities with outstanding departments in various fields, like Harvard, Yale and Stanford—and it's true these places are tops. But if we follow that line of reasoning, we could decide the same thing about our high schools. Bronx High School of Science and Stuyvesant High School in New York City also are among the best anywhere. However, as with the top-level colleges and universities, there are few such high schools, and the students who attend them are carefully selected.

U.S. colleges could also be considered the best because their graduates outperformed those in other countries, but this claim would be difficult to substantiate. There are no tests administered, here or abroad, to establish the value added by earning a college degree. The closest thing for U.S. students is *Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults*, a 1985 study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It provides information about the basic skills of young people 21 to 25 years old, including college graduates and people with a high school diploma only.

The study shows that college graduates scored a lot higher than high school graduates—though it's impossible to tell how much of this difference was a result of what college added and how much reflected the fact that kids who went to college already had better skills than kids who did not. The shocking thing is what these college graduates were not able to do. For example, 40 percent were unable to look at a simple restaurant menu and figure out how much change they would get from $3.00 if they ordered soup and a salad and left a 10 percent tip.

By contrast, what students in some other industrialized countries have to know just to get into college is impressive. As *National Tests: What Other Countries Expect Their Students to Know* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1991) tells us, French students have to write lengthy essays in subjects such as philosophy and history and geography. One of the questions in a recent four-hour history exam asked students to write an essay on Soviet domestic policy from 1953 to the present time. A four-hour philosophy exam offered topics like "Is experimental result the test of scientific proof?" Exam questions for German and Japanese students are at a comparable level of difficulty.

Admission standards in all but our best colleges are determined by the hunt for students.

We know that only a minuscule number of American students entering college would be able to handle questions like these. But what we should ask here is how many students *graduating* from college could? Is it possible that students in other developed countries know more when they enter college than most of our students do when they leave?

The U.S. has some excellent colleges and universities where a relatively few students get a postsecondary education that may be the best anywhere. But there is no basis for talk about the excellence of our entire higher education system. Students do not have to know much to get into most of our colleges, and there is no evidence that they have to know much to get out.

The standards in all but our best schools are determined by the hunt for students (read: tuition)—and that is where the competition comes in. Schools that cannot attract top-level students compete for students in the second or third or fourth levels or below. The goal is not to maintain excellence but to get the warm bodies needed to fill the freshman class. (And this willingness on the part of colleges to take what they can get is a major reason why the standards in our high schools are so low.)

There's a lot to be said for an open system that gives students a second or even a third chance to succeed, but we shouldn't confuse openness with excellence. And contrary to what voucher supporters say, colleges with low standards do not go out of business. As long as young people and their families consider a college degree important—and as long as there are government grants and loans to help finance the education of students going to colleges with the most minimal of standards—such schools can survive and even flourish.

I'm not suggesting that we go back to the time when a college education was something very few people could aspire to. But we need to do something to bring the standards in our colleges and universities up to the extravagant claims that are made for them. And we need to recognize that, if choice and competition have made American higher education what it is today, they are not solutions for what's wrong with our public schools.

MR. SHANKER'S COMMENTS APPEAR IN THIS AD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. READER CORRESPONDENCE IS INVITED. ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO MR. SHANKER AT THE AFT, 555 NEW JERSEY AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20001. ©1992 BY ALBERT SHANKER.

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ranked twenty-second out of thirty-two in reading. In any case, those who lionize District 4 acknowledge in private that reading scores have little to do with improving reading ability. Middle-class kids recruited into the district make the scores rise.

Stanley Meisler of the *Los Angeles Times* was one of the few who did question the scores, in a 1989 article. Meisler recalls that soon after his article appeared, Deborah Meier, a near legendary teacher at Central Park East School, wrote him "saying that enemies of the district had put me up to writing it." Meier, who has written about public schools in *The Nation* (where she serves on the editorial board), also wrote a four-page letter to *Education Week*'s William Snider, after a similarly skeptical article. "She told me that she didn't think anything negative should be written about District 4," Snider says. As Meier has acknowledged in one of her articles, "The primary factor in determining the quality of schools ... is who attends them." She neglected, however, to apply the same wisdom to East Harlem schools, which vie with each other for "good" kids—those usually well-behaved middle-class students who are not likely to disrupt a class.

David Kirp overlooked this point in his 1989 cover story for *Mother Jones*. Comparing Meier with Joe Clark, the famed *Lean On Me* principal who carried a baseball bat, Kirp turned Clark into a one-dimensional villain. Teachers were quoted referring to him as "Crazy Joe." Meier, whom Kirp called "a feisty 57-year-old socialist Jewish woman," came off as a caring human being with reasonable ideas—which she is. But unlike Clark, Meier can screen her kids. Her school requires parents to come in with their children for an interview before they are accepted, no easy task for families living on the fringe who may not even know her school exists. And Meier, like Clark, has been known to expel disruptive students. Some of them land in District 4's Key School, whose director complained to me, "I got everybody's rejects this year, which is not fair." Like every other choice school in District 4, including mine, Meier recruits. But she goes even further, saving a quarter of her desks for white students. The whole process keeps potential troublemakers out. Meier once told me during an interview that "40 to 45 percent of my kids are solidly middle class." At my school, the number was about 5 percent.

Amid all the excitement about choice, journalists have paid scant attention to the district's one unequivocal accomplishment: devising small schools where classes are small and teachers can actually follow their students' progress. Fleigel, along with former District 4 colleagues and current Manhattan Institute fellows Carlos Medina and Coleman Genn, talks about small schools too. But the point gets lost in the half-truths they trumpet.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has been generating its own statistical myths about District 4, using them in its crusade to give parents tax dollars for private school tuition. Witness a report from the Department of Education—one of many on District 4—titled "Choice in American Education," which claims that "on state tests administered in 1988, 84 percent of East Harlem's eighth-graders were judged competent writers." The source, according to the Education Department, was an interview with Juana Danis, the current deputy superintendent of District 4. Remembering the countless lunch hours I'd given up to teach ninth-graders how to capitalize words, I called her. Danis didn't remember the scores or the interview, and a quick phone call to Albany revealed that New York state has never administered a writing test anywhere in New York City. Either Danis or the Education Department made up the statistic. As for Fleigel, his new book is called *Miracle in East Harlem.*

BILLY TASHMAN is a writer at *The Village Voice.*

The politicized economy of Robert Reich.

THE POLICY HUSTLER

By Mickey Kaus

"Why don't you write about Ira Magaziner?" asks Robert Reich. Reich doesn't want me to do a piece about him, and over the phone he is suggesting other Clinton economic advisers who might make suitable subjects. Magaziner, a Rhode Island business consultant, is one nominee. Occidental College professor Derek Shearer is another. "Derek has written *two* books. But nobody knows about that."

Now that Reich has been put in charge of President-elect Clinton's economic transition team, it's somewhat harder for him to claim (as he did on CNN shortly before his appointment) that he's not only "out of the loop" but doesn't "know where the loop is." He is the top Clinton adviser on the issue Americans care about most. Nobody is profiling Ira Magaziner, at least not this week.

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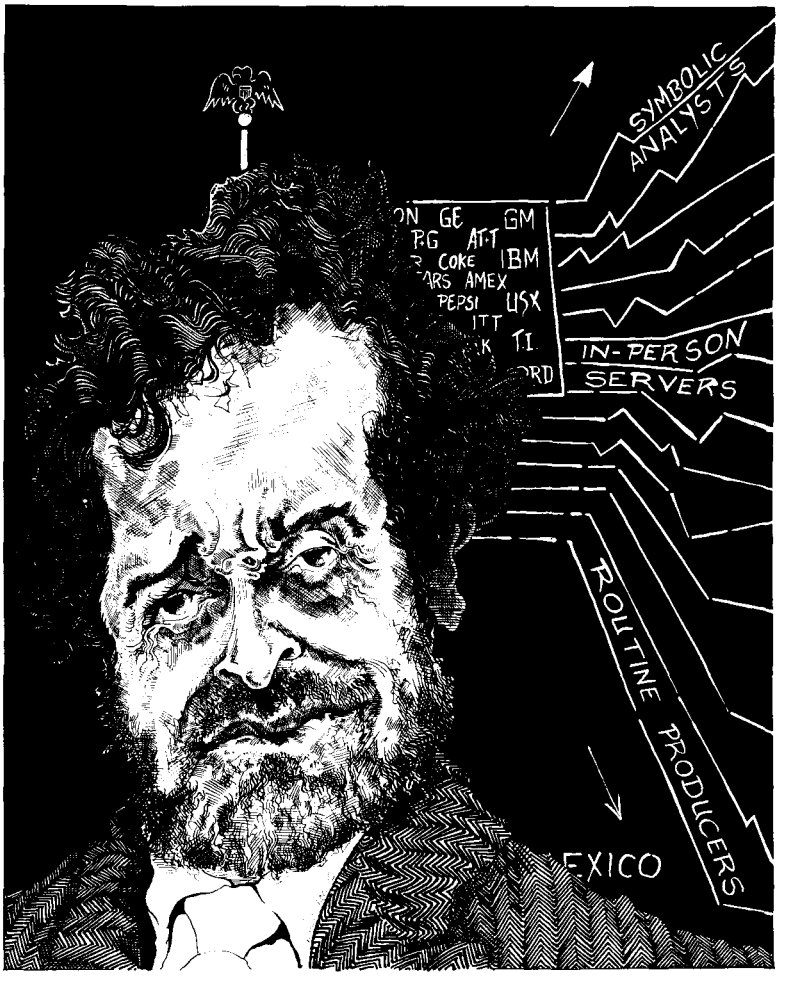
It all seems inevitable now. Is there any American journalist to whom Reich hasn't told the story of how, on the boat carrying Rhodes scholars to England in 1968, he got seasick and bonded with the gregarious fellow from Arkansas who brought him chicken soup? The story is self-deprecating and charming. But in political circles, it also carries a powerful, not-so-subliminal message: *I'm Bill Clinton's buddy.* Robert E. Levin's new book about Clinton describes how at Oxford Clinton and Reich would lead long after-dinner bull sessions about solving the world's problems. "The Conversation," as Sidney Blumenthal has capitalized it, has been maintained to this day. In all likelihood, it will continue in the Oval Office.

Reich would be a leading candidate for a top economic policy job in any Democratic administration. He advised Gary Hart and Walter Mondale in 1984, and Michael Dukakis in 1988, among others. But if it weren't for his personal bond with the incoming president, people might be more willing to take shots at him in public. As it is, most of Reich's enemies have little other than praise for him these days. "I don't feel very comfortable discussing how a colleague performs," says Richard Zeckhauser, a professor at the Kennedy School of Government and an in-house adversary. "Bob is a friend and a colleague. He's had a real impact on policy thinking," says Francis Bator, a Harvard economist and past Reich critic. "What professional economists think about some details of the work" is not important, Bator adds.



ROBERT REICH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Hmmmmm. What are they talking about—or, rather, *not* talking about? It may have something to do with Reich's controversial position at the Kennedy School. He is, by all accounts, a popular and effective instructor. But after writing or co-authoring at least seven well-received books over the past decade, Reich does not have tenure. His official title is "Lecturer in Public Policy." Part of it may have to do with the split at the Kennedy School between the number-crunching "policy analysts" (like Zeckhauser) and the "management" types (like Reich). Some of it may have to do with an academic guild mentality—although Reich writes about economics, he was trained as a lawyer, not an economist, and does not have a Ph.D. And part of it, as Reich's allies suggest, may simply be envy of his fame.

But not all of it. Let's concede that Reich is only partly an academic. He's also part journalist and part publicist—America's premier policy hustler, for lack of a better phrase. Nothing wrong with that, if the policies are good. Yet Reich is now being called on not simply to come up with policies, but to choose among them and implement them. The qualities that helped make him such a prominent and prolific neoliberal thinker may not serve the republic well in the White House.

I got a glimpse of one problem while working for Reich in 1978, when he was director of "policy planning" at the Federal Trade Commission. (Full disclosure: I have a variety of potential biases, both for and against Reich. In addition to having worked with him, I've written a book on a subject that his books also discuss, and I entertain a natural writerly envy of his success. In fact, Reich refused to answer questions for this article, saying it was "nutso" for TNR to write about one of its contributing editors. He also complained that in my book I made a "fundamental" misinterpretation of his thinking, although he wouldn't tell me what it was.)

At the FTC, I was detailed to Reich's office to work on a proposal to make it an "unfair trade practice" to close a factory. (Those were the days!) Reich was then, as now, a theatrical presence. He would occasionally entertain agency lawyers with an impression of the Ayatollah as FTC commissioner, muttering gibberish and lopping off the heads of businessmen whose products violated standards. Mostly I remember him strutting around the table tossing off ideas. The ideas were unfailingly provocative; often they seemed brilliant. But they were not all fully baked and some, based on a few suggestive news clippings or anecdotes, didn't have a great deal of

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factual grounding. Yet Reich seemed ready to go public with many of them quickly, as if they were coming so fast—and they were so exciting—that there wasn't time to sweat over the details.

Reich is, in truth, notoriously sloppy with facts. In 1989, for example, he published an article in TNR ("Members Only," June 26, 1989) attacking the idea that American-owned corporations necessarily represent the interests of America. It was a provocative and seemingly sensible notion: instead of promoting American corporate *owners*, we should promote corporations of whatever nationality that produce goods in America. After all, Reich noted, "Honda sends about 50,000 cars to Asia (including Japan) from its American factories." Meanwhile "American-made parts now constitute a smaller portion of the top models of the Big Three than they do of Honda's top-of-the-line cars." The American government was lobbying to get Japan to stop excluding Motorola's cellular phones. "But where does Motorola design its cellular telephones? In Malaysia. Where does it make the ones it is trying to sell in Japan? In a factory in Kuala Lumpur." Pretty dramatic. But then the letters started coming in. Motorola, it turned out, designed and manufactured its cellular phones in Illinois. Honda exported only about 12,000 cars a year to Asia, not 50,000. Chrysler had 92 percent American-made parts in its domestic cars; Honda wasn't close. Despite Motorola's letter, Reich repeated the "made in Malaysia" charge in *The American Prospect* two years later.

These examples aren't aberrations. In a book review in 1988, Reich said General Mills had "sold off much of Betty Crocker to foreigners." It hadn't. About the first hard number I came across in Reich's latest book, *The Work of Nations*, was wrong. (He announces that "when an American buys a Pontiac Le Mans ... [o]f the $20,000 paid to G.M., about $6,000 goes to South Korea." But a Pontiac Le Mans costs $10,000, not $20,000.) Sometimes diligent editors or researchers catch such mistakes. Sometimes they can't. A respected scholar who taught at another university—and who sympathized with Reich's political views—remembers going to hear him give a talk. "At least half the facts were off by orders of magnitude," he recalls. "I was really depressed. They weren't even asserted as hypotheticals ... they were wildly off ... sweeping statements with precise statistics [about, among other things, the returns to educational investment] which were absurdly wrong." That's why, this professor suggests, Reich is "in this marginalized status" at Harvard.

It must drive the tenured types crazy to hear Reich identified as a "professor of economics" on "This Week with David Brinkley," or to see Sam Donaldson or *The New York Times* identify him as "Dr. Reich." In this view, Reich is trying to have it both ways. He has chosen not to subject his writing to the "rigor" of academic standards, yet he illicitly enjoys the cachet and authority that come from being a "Harvard professor." The press, of course, plays along, having long ago come to value Reich as a witty, reliable, all-purpose authority. (Reich appears frequently on MacNeil/Lehrer, for example. He once guest-hosted CBS's *Nightwatch* for a week, interviewing astrologer Jeane Dixon, among others.)

The "envy" problem is undoubtedly compounded by Reich's ingratiating manner, which some find charming and others oily. Early this year, when TNR published a Notebook item charging that Rhodes scholars had a hypertrophied "desire to please," Reich sent in an unsolicited letter to the editor offering "as counter-evidence ... Michael Kinsley, Rhodes scholar class of 1972, who has demonstrated these many years an admirably consistent intention to inflict intellectual discomfort." Case closed!

So what if Reich isn't a "rigorous" academic, or if he's a self-promoter, or if he gets the little facts wrong, as long as he gets the big ideas right? "A greater abundance of fact provides no guarantee of wiser policy ...," as Reich has delicately put it. But assessing the wisdom of Reich's policy is no easy task; there is so much of it. Over the past decade, Reich has promoted at least four big ideas, which do—and don't—fit together in revealing ways. They are:

1. Pie-slicing: Reich first emerged, at the end of the '70s, as a critic of executives who, instead of producing new wealth, simply rearranged productive assets through mergers, lawsuits, and the manipulation of tax laws, accounting rules, and rates of exchange. All of these practices reflected a short-term outlook, Reich argued, and they all wasted a lot of American minds—minds that could be at work in "pie-enlarging" professions such as engineering. This critique is now so familiar as to be a cliché, but it was relatively fresh at the time, even mildly heretical. Not only was Reich criticizing the redistributive orientation of his fellow Democrats, he was implicitly criticizing his fellow lawyers at the FTC, many of whom were engaged in litigious crusades that could be called "pie-slicing."

2. Industrial policy: In a 1982 book written with Magaziner, and in his 1983 book *The Next American Frontier*, Reich argued that it wasn't enough for government to get monetary and fiscal policy right. The government had to join with American businesses and labor unions to "fashion explicit agreements to restructure American industry." In exchange, the industries would get "financial support or import protection," although the latter "would be temporary." During the early 1980s Reich was also quite suspicious of Japanese firms doing business in the United States. "In the short term," he told *The New York Times*, "these kinds of foreign investments are probably good for the United States ... because they preserve jobs. In the long term, however, this relationship is not healthy for the U.S. economy simply because Americans working for foreign owners do not get the kind of technical learning they need.... They get only as much technical education and expertise as the parent company is willing to parcel out."

It was said that Mondale, after reading *The Next American Frontier*, announced enthusiastically, "This should do it for the Democrats in 1984." But the idea of industrial

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policy fell into disfavor after Reagan's re-election (though, as Reich points out, Reagan practiced a form of de facto industrial policy through Defense Department subsidies and "voluntary" Japanese import quotas).

3. Flexible production: Most of *The Next American Frontier* was not explicitly about "industrial policy." It was about the impending shift in "all industrialized nations" from "high-volume, standardized production" (in which assembly lines churn out identical goods) to "flexible system production" in which "teams of workers" produce "smaller batches of more specialized, higher-valued products—goods that are precision engineered, that are custom-tailored to serve individual markets, or that embody rapidly changing technologies." Reich announced that "America's economic future now depends, in large part, on the speed and efficiency with which its labor force can be shifted into flexible system production."

That meant solving what Reich (in an excellent chapter of his 1987 book, *Tales of a New America*) called the problem of "trust." Basically, "flexible production" requires highly skilled workers who constantly retrain themselves. But no single firm has an incentive to adequately train employees who may take their skills to some other employer (or who might set up shop on their own). Similarly, no employee has much incentive to invest heavily in a collaboration with an employer who might lay him off and move to South Korea.

In *The Next American Frontier*, the attempt to solve this trust problem drove Reich to advocate an extreme form of corporatism. In exchange for "restructuring assistance," businesses would "agree to maintain their old work forces intact" even if they closed plants or diversified into new product lines. Workers would participate in management, in effect becoming citizens of their companies. They would be reluctant to leave, because business enterprises would "largely replace geographic jurisdictions as conduits of government support for economic and human development." Welfare, health care, day care, even Social Security would be dispensed by companies, not by the government. "Business enterprises," Reich declared, "are rapidly becoming the central mediating structures in American society, replacing geographic communities as the locus of social services and, indeed, social life." As proof of this rather startling proposition, Reich offered a few factoids about the growth of employee benefits (e.g.: "Some companies have constructed town houses for their employees").

4. Borderless economies: In his 1991 book, *The Work of Nations*, however, Reich presents a quite different view of the world economy. No longer are Japanese corporations sinister "national multinationals" that might keep the good jobs at home. That, Reich now says, is a "curious assumption ... a charming, but ... naively vestigial thought." Instead, Reich argues that all corporations are "cosmopolitan" in that they owe no national allegiance. Capital and information flow freely across borders. The only factors that aren't mobile, the only things a nation really has to sell, are the quality of its infrastructure and the skills of its work force. And those skills are increasingly important, as trade drives down the price of unskilled labor. Meanwhile, the most skilled workers, the "symbolic analysts"—lawyers, pop stars, bankers, contributing editors, etc.—are doing well, in part because globalization increases the market for their services.

America's main task, in this world economy, is to improve the skills of its work force and build its infrastructure, the better to attract international investment. But that investment should be welcomed, from any corporation, no matter what its nationality. The editors of *The Atlantic* call this the Field of Dreams approach—"If we train ourselves, they will come." It is embodied in Clinton's *Putting People First* plan, which would spend heavily on "human capital" and infrastructure.

Reich's sudden refusal to distinguish between American and Japanese firms profoundly distresses many of his former fellow industrial policy-makers. They note that though IBM may see itself as a cosmopolitan corporation, with no particular national loyalties, that doesn't seem to be how Fujitsu sees itself. Lester Thurow, for example, charges that Reich is simply "wrong" to say that the typical Japanese multinational "promotes citizens of many nations to its executive ranks." There is talk that Reich simply couldn't take the opprobrium that went with his previous anti-Japanese stance. In *The Work of Nations*, Reich offers no explanation for why he changed his mind; indeed, he doesn't acknowledge that he's done so (or that he previously advocated some of the limited protectionist measures he now condemns). In a subsequent article, however, he declared: "I haven't changed. American companies have changed." Whatever Reich's reasons for reversing his position, this explanation rings false, since the tendency of American corporations to owe "allegiance to no particular country" and the underlying reasons for this (mobility of capital and information) were all fully noted in his earlier writings.

Nor is it clear what's happened to "flexible production" in Reich's latest global vision. Presumably flexible production is still one of the things we should be training our workers to do (though the wacky corporatism of *The Next American Frontier* has disappeared in the new book). But where flexible production was once the glorious wave of the future, now Reich seems suddenly pessimistic about its potential. "Of course," he writes, "since millions of other production workers around the world are seeking to learn these same advanced production techniques, America's production workers would still face formidable competition from foreigners willing to labor for a fraction of even the minimum American wage. Extra training may retard the loss of these production jobs or the decline in their real wages, but it is far from a solution to the problems faced by unskilled and semiskilled American workers competing worldwide."

What, then, will reverse the inequalities produced by the global marketplace—the decline of wages for the majority, the "secession" of the "top fifth" (the symbolic analysts who are making out like bandits and isolating themselves in suburbia)? "The problem is far from insol-

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uble," Reich confidently asserts. But he admits that progressive taxation is "no panacea for widening income disparities." He admits that training all Americans to be symbolic analysts would be a "daunting" task. He holds out a bit of hope that flexible-production techniques might be applied to the provision of services that can't be performed from abroad, citing the example of a store clerk who controls inventory by using a computer.

But mainly Reich seems to rely on two mechanisms. First, he would attract and cultivate colonies of symbolic analysts, including "scientists, engineers, and technicians" involved in high-tech production. Reich, in this respect, has *not* abandoned industrial policy (or the idea of "picking" winning new technologies). He simply wants to use government subsidies to attract "any corporation, regardless of the nationality of its owners—so long as the company agrees to undertake research, development, and fabrication in the United States." The assistance could be directly "tied to the number of Americans involved in the research, development, and engineering." Why subsidize symbolic analysts, the only group already succeeding in the global economy? Well, because these rich Americans will then employ other Americans every time they "have their houses, cars, bodies, or tools repaired," or "ride in a cab," or "walk into a retail store or restaurant." A "relatively few star software designers, lawyers, product engineers, management consultants, or movie directors can support, indirectly, a much larger number of in-person servers, as the symbolic analysts' global earnings spread throughout the economy."

Never mind the disturbing master/servant implications of this Reichian form of trickle down. There is a practical catch, which Reich (to his credit) attempts to confront. The catch is immigration. The rich will seek to "open the nation's borders to immigrants, who are invariably eager to provide in-person services for low wages." That leads Reich to a second, implicit mechanism of income-equalization. Having previously condemned anti-immigrant sentiment as the product of an obsolete (and racist) fear of "the mob at the gates," he can't quite bring himself to explicitly call for immigration restrictions. But that's clearly where he's headed.

Even if Clinton makes him economic czar, Reich is unlikely to try to implement all of his ideas. He *is* likely to wind up supervising an expensive program of "investment" in "human capital" and infrastructure. What do his writings suggest about how he'd do that job? Presumably, he's thought a lot about it; the need for such investment is one consistent theme in his writing. But there are at least three disturbing signs that Reich may not be the ideal man to administer this laudable effort.

First, Reich is not above disingenuousness, even demagoguery. For example, in his book *The Resurgent Liberal*, Reich declares that "in November 1986, the progressive income tax was substantially ended" because marginal rates on the richest Americans were lowered to 28 percent by the 1986 tax reform. But, as Reich surely knows, the 1986 reform also closed loopholes, so that those lower marginal rates actually produced higher effective tax rates on the rich—a *more* progressive, not less progressive, income tax.

Even more relevant is the "tripartite" budget solution that Reich has apparently sold to Clinton. Reich's scheme divides the budget into "spending on retirees" (Category One), spending on current living standards (Category Two), and investments in future productive capacity (Category Three). Reich's argument is that we shouldn't run a deficit to pay for current spending (Two), but we should be able to run a deficit to pay for investments (Three). Fair enough. What's sneaky is the way Reich takes Social Security off the table by sticking it in Category One and then declaring that "neither of the other two categories should be able to raid it for funds." That might make sense to the extent Social Security benefits have been funded by past contributions. But, as Reich knows, benefits are funded by payroll taxes paid by current (Category Two) workers, and they far exceed what retirees themselves contributed to the system. Why should Reich treat the windfall benefits sent to currently living 65-year-olds any differently from the money spent subsidizing currently living farmers, or compensating currently unemployed workers? Reich's Category One is a transparent political dodge designed to avoid confronting the possibility of unpopular Social Security cuts.

A second troubling quality, amply displayed in Reich's writings, is breathtaking overconfidence. Reich will skillfully and subtly outline a problem, and then content himself with a laundry list of gimmicks when it comes to the solution. Various tricky capital gains breaks. Expanded IRAs and Keogh plans. A new U.S. Investment Representative. A Presidential Medal of Economic Citizenship. There is little sense that Reich has grappled with the difficulties or inadequacies of his proposals. Has he sweated over the issue of which type of "civilian research agency" can help businesses move into high-skilled production? Does he know which "investments" in human capital will actually pay off? In the White House, a cavalier attitude toward the facts will do more than alienate a few academics or prompt some embarrassing letters to the editor. It will waste billions of dollars.

There is also something disconcerting about the righteousness with which Reich, proclaiming a new weltanschauung, will denounce or dismiss the position he held two years earlier. We cannot allow foreign investments that "give our expertise to the Japanese" (1985). No, that's "vestigial thinking" (1991), even "faintly jingoistic" (1989). The "temporary use of tariffs or quotas in order to protect 'infant industries'" is a wise policy (1983). Wait a minute! There is "no justification for conditioning market access itself upon local production" (1991). "Tripartite boards composed of government, business, and labor ... are no answer" (1980). We must "enable government, business, and labor to fashion explicit agreements" (1983). "Business enterprises are rapidly becoming the central mediating structures in American society, replacing geographic communities

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as the locus of ... social life" (1983). On second thought, corporate loyalty is dissolving as symbolic analysts secede into their geographic communities (1991).

Reich's most annoying habit—and it is his characteristic mode of argument—is to set up artificial dichotomies of cartoonishly extreme positions, which enables him to dramatically unveil a sensible-sounding synthesis without really discussing what it entails. "But must we choose between zero-sum nationalism and impassive cosmopolitanism?" Of course not. There is "a third, superior position: a positive economic national-ism" of unspecified ferocity. "American political rhetoric often frames the decision in the dramatic terms of myth: either we leave the market free, or the government controls it.... There is a third alternative, however." "Two fictions confound discussions of economic change in America. The first is the fiction of automatic adjustment" in which layoffs are relatively costless. The "other, opposite fiction" proposes that people "never adjust to change but simply suffer." Reich inhabits a "middle, messier ground" in which "[t]here are many options"—so many that after reading a book he co-authored about the Chrysler bailout, I still don't know exactly what option he preferred.

Finally, Reich's tendency to avoid struggling with the difficulties of his proposed solutions gives them a pat quality. He conveys no sense that the great shifts he plans—the shift to a human-capital intensive, global future, or perhaps to a flexible-production future—will be anything but painless. You "invest" in human capital and infrastructure. The economy grows. It's like watering a plant.

But what if we train workers and for several years there are no employers to employ them? (Unions have already amassed huge retraining funds that go unspent because workers don't want to take that risk.) What if the government's industrial policy-makers subsidize some new technologies that flop? Even if we ultimately make the shift from our industrial past to a higher-skilled future, the transition is likely to be long and painful. Some people's jobs and lives will be ruined. When Clinton talks, you sense he knows this. Indeed, his great strength may be his ability to talk Americans into taking the risk of such changes. ("None of us can promise any of you that what you now do for a living is absolutely safe from now on.... There's too much change in the world," he said in the second debate.) Reich occasionally leaves the impression of believing that if only he could get together with all of America's business leaders, they would "collaborate" on some "adjustment" plan, and everything would be fine.

Luckily, reporters and advisers who have talked to Clinton say he is well aware of the weaknesses of his old Rhodes buddy. And Reich clearly brings with him some virtues that aren't apparent in his writings. He is, virtually all who know him agree, a gifted conciliator. During the campaign he helped bridge the Clinton camp's internal policy disputes. Indeed, those who are most suspicious of Reich's interventionist "industrial policy-making" instincts now support him as far more "responsible" than Clinton's *other* Rhodes pal, Magaziner.

The debate about Robert Reich, then, has framed a false choice. Some say he is an unctuous faux-economist whose sweeping, shifting pronouncements ignore inconvenient facts. Others claim he is a brilliant visionary who can save America. But there is a third, superior position. Reich is an amazingly energetic thinker and organizer who has caught onto some good, big ideas before the rest of the pack. He could be very useful to a president who is as smart as he is, and who knows him well enough to know where he's likely to go wrong. Here's hoping. •

The military vs. itself.

AMERICAN INQUISITION

By Scott Shuger

As Bill Clinton readies himself to lift the ban on gay men and women in the military—and as the top brass begins to resist—one central argument in Clinton's favor should not be overlooked. The enforcement of the ban is invariably cruel, brutal, and without virtually any of the legal safeguards civilians take for granted in judicial proceedings. In a culture populated mostly by the young and legally unsophisticated, policed by investigators with wide-ranging powers of seizure and detention, and controlled by commanders with tremendous discretionary power, the ban fosters an inquisi-

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SCOTT SHUGER is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

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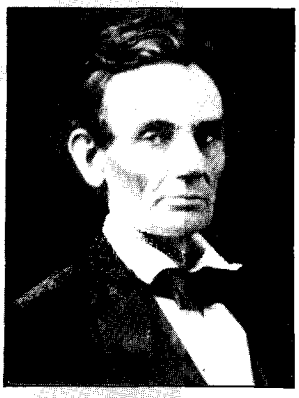

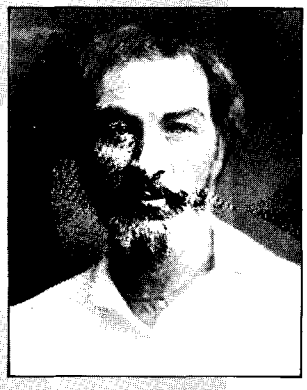

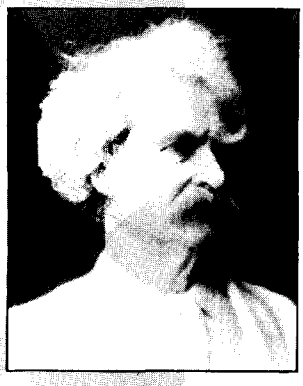

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Authors pictured, top to bottom: Abraham Lincoln, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Flannery O'Connor. Opposite page, clockwise from top: William Tecumseh Sherman, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Wright, Willa Cather, William Faulkner.

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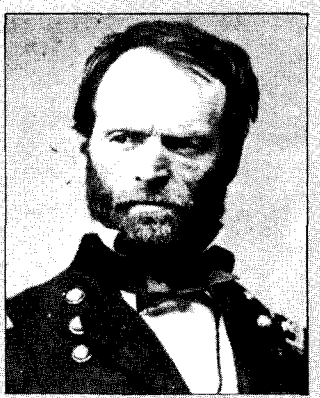

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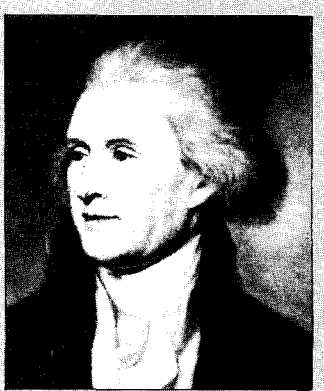

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tional climate much worse than civilians can imagine.

An exaggeration? Try a quiz. In the United States, citizens thought to be gay can be: a) fined $27,000 and forced to undergo an anal cavity search in front of their colleagues; b) interrogated about their partners and their sexual practices for hours without breaks for rest or food; c) transferred to a menial job and have their pay cut 90 percent; d) sent to a war zone without ammunition. If the citizen in question happens to be in the military, the answer is: e) all of the above. A) happened to Army Colonel Edward Modesto at Fort Carson, Colorado, in 1990; b) to Navy Petty Officer Terry Knox at the Parris Island Marine base in 1988; c) to Navy Petty Officer Gregg Monsma of the USS *Berkeley* in 1992 (see "Sailor's Story," page 28); d) to Marine Corporal Eric Barker during Desert Storm.

Or take the case of Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Dave Eckert. In the summer of 1988, when Eckert, who is gay, was falsely accused of child molestation by his disgruntled ex-lover, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations opened a wide-ranging inquiry. The ex-lover, who was an alcoholic, gave OSI agents a detailed account of his sex life with Eckert while working his way through a six-pack. Later, in a hearing, the accuser admitted that the investigators "promised me the sky": the OSI agents also falsely said that Eckert was a threat to him. When the agents met resistance from another witness, they contacted the witness's mother and falsely told her that he had AIDS. (After Eckert threatened to expose such tactics, the Air Force dropped its plans for a court-martial, and Eckert retired with an honorable discharge and full benefits.)

Then there are the incidents that took place between January and May this year on the Navy ships *Independence* and *Blue Ridge*. More than twenty sailors from these two ships were court-martialed or discharged for homosexuality, although only two of them were found to have committed a homosexual act on a ship. Like most military investigations into homosexuality, this one targeted acts that occurred off-base and off-duty. Several of those brought in were questioned for hours without benefit of counsel. One sailor was given three days on bread and water in the *Blue Ridge* brig for alleged consensual off-ship sex. At least one of the sailors who admitted to homosexual acts on his own time, a veteran of Desert Storm, received an "other than honorable" discharge despite having an above-average service record with no prior disciplinary episodes. "He wanted specifics," said another sailor, referring to the Naval Investigative Service agent who interrogated him after he was named by others under similar pressure. "'Did you have oral sex?' 'Was there anal intercourse?' 'Did you use a condom?' 'If the guy ejaculated, did you swallow?'"

Such detailed investigations drive the monetary costs of the military's ban to astonishing heights. According to recent figures released by the General Accounting Office, the Pentagon discharged nearly 17,000 servicemen and women in the 1980s, at a cost of at least a half billion dollars.

But it's the human cost that is most unacceptable. The ban encourages a gruesome invasion of private lives without reference to the performance of public duties. One night in the fall of 1983, while standing watch in the National Security Agency's signals intelligence operations center at Fort Meade, Maryland, Andrew Webb was called to the security office. This was something new for Webb, who had been a model NSA employee during his year there, following nine years' exemplary service in the Coast Guard, five as an officer. Webb was in charge of all NSA intelligence reporting for Western Third World nations. The intelligence reports he wrote four or five times daily were routed to the president, the vice president, and the director of the CIA. His latest NSA evaluation had given him a performance rating of excellent, and stated that Webb "performed at a superior level and displayed an outstanding capacity for acquiring technical knowledge" and that he was "an invaluable asset during crisis situations."

The two men waiting for Webb in the security office weren't there to pay him compliments. One of the agents placed an "interview consent" form in front of Webb for his signature. The sheet informed him that the room was bugged and had a two-way mirror. "You sign this," one of the agents told Webb, "or it's going to go hard on you."

What Webb didn't know was that a month before, OSI agents had begun a hunt for homosexuals at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. One of the airmen they had grilled admitted to being gay, and—in the hope of easing his own punishment and perhaps upgrading his discharge—had identified other gays on base. One of those men admitted having sex with Webb in Webb's apartment.

Fifteen minutes after he walked into the security room, Webb's intelligence career was over. The next day his security badge and his clearances were pulled and he was transferred to the NSA warehouse. "One day I'm writing reports for the president," says Webb, "and the next day I'm unpacking crates." While at the warehouse, in hopes of winning back his job, Webb consented to be interrogated about every sexual liaison he'd ever had. The session lasted for more than four hours and included the question: "What sorts of things do you like to do in bed?" The three-page, single-spaced NSA report on the interrogation was a compendium of passages such as: "Webb declared that his first homosexual encounter occurred in October 1982 with [X].... Webb met this individual through an advertisement he placed in the *Washingtonian* magazine." Although the NSA never found any evidence that Webb had failed to perform well on the job or had done anything improper with classified information, the agency was deaf to Webb's appeals for reinstate-

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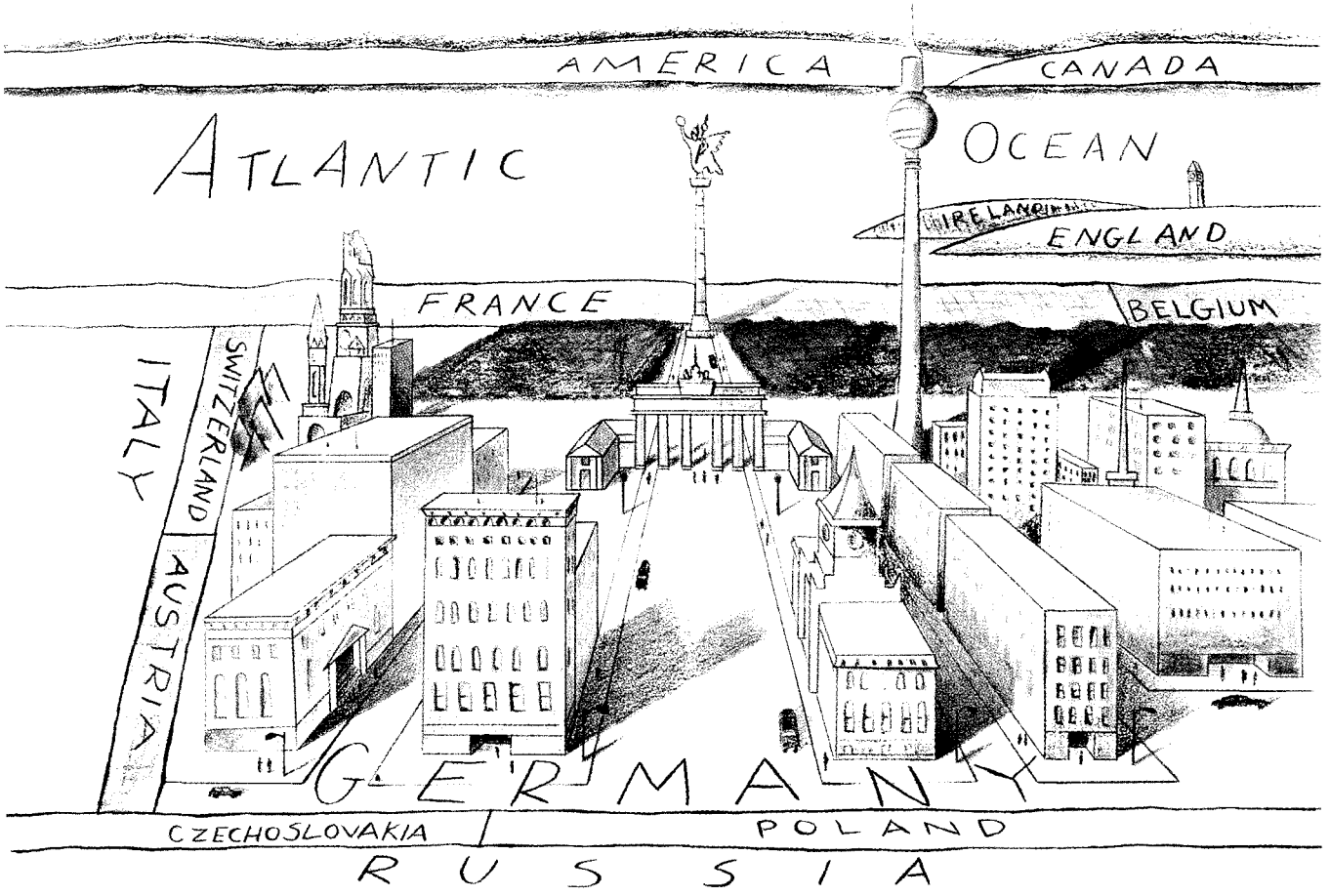

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Sailor's Story

Gregg Monsma was a Navy petty officer trained to work on nuclear power systems. He served in the Gulf war aboard the cruiser *Long Beach*. During a postwar port call in Bahrain, Monsma was beaten by six shipmates for being a "fag." When he reported the assault to the ship's executive officer, the X.O. took no action, except to warn Monsma that pursuit of the matter would result in Monsma being thrown out of the Navy for homosexuality. In the ensuing weeks, he got sucker-punched and tripped in passageways, his mattress and bedding were stolen, and his Walkman was destroyed. His complaints to superiors went unheeded.

In November 1991 an article about radiation dangers aboard the *Long Beach* appeared in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. The Navy concluded that the story was based on documents leaked from the division of the ship in which Monsma worked. A number of sailors, including Monsma, were brought before the ship's commander at "Captain's Mast"—a hearing at which the ship's commanding officer is both judge and jury. Monsma was charged with forging signatures on a document certifying the qualifications of some of the sailors working on the ship's reactor. Monsma denies the charge now, but says that he didn't deny it then because he hoped that if he was found guilty at Captain's Mast, he would be removed from the ship. And indeed, he was demoted one rank, fined, forbidden from re-enlisting, and transferred.

Monsma was sent to the destroyer *Berkeley*, which was being decommissioned in San Diego. For the two previous years, Monsma had been a member of the San Diego Veterans Association, a predominantly gay group that does community work with homosexual veterans and AIDS patients and contests the Pentagon's ban. After his transfer, he was elected SDVA's president. When Commander Fred Mallgrave, Monsma's commanding officer on the *Berkeley*, found out, he told Monsma that he was in violation of Navy policy. But Monsma had not claimed to be gay; the military ban against gays, it seems, also prohibits military advocates of military gays. Mallgrave gave Monsma, who is married but separated, twenty-four hours to prove that he was supporting his wife. (Under Navy regulations, sailors with dependents are only required to certify annually that they are supporting them.) On the advice of his attorney, Monsma declined to provide further proof unless given a written order to do so. Mallgrave wouldn't issue a written order; instead he cut off Monsma's married housing pay and his nuclear qualification bonus, and ordered the recoupment from Monsma of all past payments. As a result, Monsma, who previously had been making $1,480 a month, this year received a total of $1,900 from March through September. The *Berkeley*'s disbursing officer told Monsma that he would not receive a regular paycheck again until the fall of 1993. Monsma made at least three written requests to see his service record. He didn't get a reply.

Mallgrave also ordered Monsma reassigned from his engineering job to a menial food service position. This was an odd job for Monsma, who finished sixteenth in his class of eighty-four at the Navy's nuclear reactor school. In an interview, Mallgrave said that there is "absolutely no connection between Monsma being sent to the mess decks and this controversy." He said that there probably weren't any other men available in the engineering department who were junior to Monsma. Yet a ship's memo shows that there were four such sailors.

Mallgrave also asked the Naval Investigative Service to check out Monsma for fraud and homosexuality. When Monsma made a request for leave to attend the annual convention of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Veterans of America in Washington, D.C., he was turned down. Monsma was told that he was considered a "flight risk." The prohibition was reversed only after an aide to Democratic Representative Gerry Studds of Massachusetts, responding to a call from Monsma, intervened. But before Monsma's trip, the NIS photographed and fingerprinted him and required him to supply the NIS with the published conference schedule. "Don't be surprised if you're followed," Monsma says an agent told him.

Monsma had a layover in Kansas City. As he got off the plane, he saw a man in a police uniform holding a sign with Monsma's name on it. The man identified himself as a Kansas City police officer and said he'd been asked by the NIS to watch Monsma while he was in the airport. He stayed with Monsma until he boarded his connecting flight. In Washington, Monsma noticed a man following him on and off the Metro and into buildings where convention events were being held. After returning to San Diego, Monsma thought he was being followed as he drove home from work; sometimes the car tailing him would sit for long periods in the fire lane outside his apartment. Back aboard the ship, a sailor new to Monsma's work area abruptly asked him, "So how's your wife?" mentioning her by name, although Monsma had never told her name to anyone in the crew. The next day the co-worker disappeared. Monsma says his division officer said the man had been suddenly hospitalized with a brain tumor.

On May 26, Monsma informed the Navy in an official letter that he is bisexual. He wished to stay on active duty, but made the statement because, "under current conditions, created by the Commanding Officer, USS *Berkeley*, I can no longer faithfully serve without fear of continued harassment and blatant discrimination. My finances have now deteriorated to the point that I must declare bankruptcy, unless my full pay and allowances are reinstated immediately."

In June, with no change in his situation, Monsma became despondent and considered suicide. He checked himself into the local naval hospital, where he was released after four days. Monsma says that when he crossed paths with Mallgrave afterward, he was warned: "Next time you try and kill yourself, make sure you do it right." Mallgrave denies making the remark. After all, Mallgrave explains, "My philosophy about this issue is the Christian one: You hate the sin, but not the sinner."

Last September, after a naval grand jury-like investigation into Monsma's case, the admiral in charge of the *Berkeley*'s naval base concluded that no fraud had been committed. Monsma was legally married, should not be court-martialed, and was entitled to the pay and allowances his captain had summarily cut off. (He still hasn't been repaid.) Then, after more than two years of constant harassment and intimidation, Monsma was honorably discharged under the homosexuality separation code.

In a recent interview on ABC's "20/20," General Norman Schwarzkopf said that when the enemy is at "the barricades," gays in the ranks are a threat to "unit cohesion." Had the enemy encountered Monsma two years ago, they would have found a well-trained and committed sailor. Today he wouldn't be there to help stop them. Which raises the question: Who is it that is really hurting "unit cohesion"—the gays in the military or their persecutors?

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ment. After being told he was about to be fired, Webb quit.

Webb's experience was mild compared with what happened to Larry Meholick. During his three years in the Army, Meholick served eighteen months of combat duty in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne and won the Bronze Star. After the war, Meholick received an accounting degree from Penn State and went to work for Rockwell International. He was laid off in 1982 and joined the Navy, eventually rising in 1989 to head disbursing clerk on the USS *Robert E. Peary*. His first commanding officer on the *Peary* later wrote that Meholick was "among the finest petty officers of the command.... So exceptional was his professionalism and dedication to his shipmates, his ship, and its commanding officer, that I meritoriously advanced him to First Class Petty Officer. This is considered the highest performance award by a commanding officer, as I was allocated only one such meritorious advancement to First Class Petty Officer each year."

Today Meholick is a prisoner in the Navy Consolidated Brig at the Miramar air station outside San Diego, serving the second year of a six-year sentence. What happened in between could probably only happen in the U.S. military. While off-duty in Pearl Harbor, Meholick, who says he's bisexual, occasionally invited other sailors from the *Peary* to his house for drinking and sex. Among the crew members who went to his house on separate occasions in 1990 were Jimmy Jones, Frederick Knauss, and Larry Locke. In October 1990 Meholick found out from his commanding officer that he was going to be pulled off the ship because of allegations of homosexuality. Complaints had been made against him to the Naval Investigative Service by Jones and Knauss.

As the holiday season rolled around, Locke asked Meholick if he could borrow some money for Christmas leave. Meholick lent him $350. Later, when Meholick asked to be repaid, Locke refused. Shortly afterward, NIS received a third complaint of homosexual behavior against Meholick—from Locke. A court-martial was scheduled. Jones, Knauss, and Locke each charged that Meholick had forcibly sodomized them. Meholick admits that he had sex with each man but insists it was all consensual. Meholick says that Jones and Knauss made the charges because they had difficulties with Meholick, their military superior, at work, and that Locke made the charges to get out of his debt. Facing fifty-four years in the brig, Meholick tried to kill himself with a hunting knife.

He didn't die. In the hospital, his military lawyer brought him a plea bargain: If he pleaded guilty to consensual sodomy with Jones and to forcible sodomy with Knauss and Locke, he would be dishonorably discharged and his sentence would be reduced to twelve years. Loaded up with anti-depressant medication, Meholick signed.

He was eventually sentenced to six years, despite overwhelming evidence that he wasn't guilty. Locke had waited six months after the alleged facts before coming forward with his accusation; Jones and Knauss had waited seven. The accusers' statements constituted the only evidence in the case—there were no weapons, no injuries, no torn clothes. There was no physical evidence at all. Furthermore, at a hearing held prior to the court-martial, Jones referred to the statement he originally gave to the NIS and said, "I would like to correct the bottom of the first page where it says, 'I'm not sure how long I was passed out, but I remember being awakened by a severe pain in my ass.' I really don't remember this part. At the time, I was very upset with [Petty Officer] Meholick and wanted to get back at him, so this line is not true. The next line, '[Petty Officer] Meholick was trying to fuck me in my ass!' is also incorrect. Furthermore, where it says, 'I resisted [Petty Officer] Meholick to the best I could, but he just overpowered me,' I don't remember resisting or anything.... I made a number of deliberate misrepresentations in my statement. I was motivated by revenge to get back at [Petty Officer] Meholick.... I really don't remember a lot about that night." And at the same hearing, Knauss testified, "[Petty Officer] Meholick never forced me to do anything. He never told me to do this or threaten[ed] me."

Petty Officer Meholick has four more years of his sentence to serve. In the coming months, as the generals and admirals press Clinton to reverse his campaign promise and uphold the ban, the new president should point to men like Meholick and sign its repeal. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Making the Best of It

Federico Fellini can be called the most naked genius in the history of film. In 1963 he made *8½*, a quasi-confessional comedy-drama about the modern artist's torment: he or she is bursting with talent and can find nothing to expend it on. Out of this crisis Fellini made a masterpiece; since then, that same crisis has been often more evident than acknowledged in his work. Then in 1987 he faced it again, without pretense, and made a film although he had no film to make. He simply poured forth his virtuosity for 108 minutes, like a master pianist-composer improvising.

At last, after five years, that improvisation (so to speak) reaches the United States. **Intervista** (Castle Hill) is the context of *8½* without its center. The title means "Interview." In it Fellini discloses—though obliquely, gorgeously, wittily—that he is desperate. (In 1969 he made a T.V. film called *Fellini: A Director's Notebook*; I haven't seen it, but according to accounts it's a much more conventional interview, not an implicit confession.)

In *Intervista* the framework is a visit to Cinecittà, the large film studio complex outside Rome, by some Japanese T.V. people who have come to interview Fellini as he prepares a picture based on Kafka's *Amerika*. Peter Bondanella tells us in his book on the director that Fellini had at one time contemplated making such a film, "but by the time he made *Intervista*, this project had already been discarded." Nevertheless, out of this already-shelved project and the Japanese interviewing, Fellini concocted a script that at least allowed him to *film*.

For the sake of the T.V. people, Fellini re-creates the beginning of his career—his first visit to Cinecittà in 1940, by tram, a young journalist sent to interview a reigning film beauty. His re-creation of this episode, like the entire film, is not presented "straight"; it is intercut with the present, with Fellini's comments, with diversions, and enrichments. For instance, for the tram trip, Fellini presses into service the producer of *Intervista*, who puts on a Fascist uniform and becomes one of the passengers. The tram takes the young Fellini on excursions that were quite impossible, ending with shots of American Indians and elephants, which announce that they are nearing Cinecittà.

Bondanella quotes Fellini on *Intervista*:

> This pleasant chat among friends represents the ultimate result of my way of making cinema: where there is no longer a story or a script, and not even a feeling, unless it is the feeling, precisely, of being inside a kind of creativity that refuses every preconceived order.

That's putting a bold face on it. His creativity hasn't refused orders: it seems to be seeking orders and, not finding any, pours forth anyway. Out of some of the most banal "backstage" studio clichés, Fellini makes enchantment, wistfulness, fun. The familiar mixture of tap dancers, harem girls, assorted uniforms of various centuries, the mélange of different sets are used here for something more than satire. Fellini never mocks any of it, though he sees the joke. He very obviously loves it all, for at least two reasons. This is where his gifts flourish (as a painter loves the smell of paint); and this fast-moving, irrational mélange embodies profundities.

"What is reality?" "What is 'now'?" These trite though trenchant questions Fellini doesn't need to ask: he knows the answers about as well as is possible. What moves us at Cinecittà, why it is so powerfully mysterious to see a tower of arc lights beam into life against the dark, why the immense space of an empty studio seems to echo even when it is silent, is because here occurs an argument with mortality. The mere fact that film can fix the moment implies that time is rushing by even while the moment is being fixed. Film, with all its fakeries, understands death. This is why nostalgia flourishes so easily in the film world, why the reminders of past Fellini films, which he includes here, seem like antiquity though they are only a few decades gone.

Fellini capitalizes specifically on that truth in a long sequence with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg. Mastroianni suddenly makes an appearance outside Fellini's office window, elevated by a crane, in heavy makeup and a magician's outfit that he is wearing for a T.V. commercial he is making on the lot. Fellini, who calls him Marcellino, whisks him and others off in several cars to pay a long-postponed visit to Ekberg in her guarded villa outside Rome. The once-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Glengarry Glen Ross. *David Mamet's excellent play diminishes slightly by being adapted to the screen, but, powerfully acted, it is still a major work. (Reviewed 10/26/92)* **Of Mice and Men.** *The surprise is that there's still some force in Steinbeck's carpentered tragedy. John Malkovich's Lenny is flabby, but Gary Sinise has flavor as George. (11/2/92)* **Simple Men.** *Hal Hartley's third feature confirms that this young American writer-director has his own skewed but illuminating view of what's happening around him. Quietly witty, delicately made. (11/9/92)* **Van Gogh.** *Maurice Pialat's unique approach reminds us that no subject is tired if the vision of it is fresh. Jacques Dutronc is movingly bemused as the painter, a man who is not quite among us even in his last sixty-seven days on earth. (11/30/92)* **—SK**

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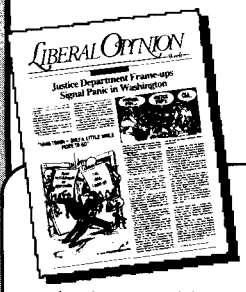

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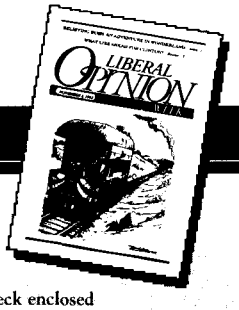

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incredible Ekberg, now huge as well as tall, welcomes them all, including the Japanese T.V. people. While she is serving roasted chestnuts and wine, Mastroianni, as magician, conjures up a screen and projects a couple of segments from *La Dolce Vita* with himself and Ekberg—in 1959—including the Fontana di Trevi scene.

Intercut with these glimpses of two of the most beautiful faces ever filmed, we glimpse those faces today, watching their faces then. When the film segments are finished, Mastroianni says to her softly, "Anita, I have so many questions to ask you." We prepare to revel in rue. He continues softly: "Like—do you have any schnapps?" She laughs and goes for the drink, and the joke makes the moment even more rueful. All through the film, Fellini undercuts sentiment with humor, knowing in his wizardly way that this makes the poignancy more poignant.

Ekberg's presence raises the subject of Fellini's view of women, here and elsewhere. It was never as empathic a view as Antonioni's, whose moral protagonists are often women. Even when Fellini uses a female protagonist, as in *La Strada, Nights of Cabiria, Juliet of the Spirits*, she is a woman who accepts her life as determined by men. Fellini's women are figures, often secondary ones, in a man's world. This may in time date him; but it cannot affect his magic as a portrayer of that world.

Intervista affords one more example of a paradox in Fellini. He has never, to my knowledge, directed in the theater, yet many of his films, including this one, contain theatrical elements—in lighting or view or the idea of entrances and exits. Bergman, who has spent much more time in the theater than in film, has fewer theater elements in his films. Fellini, distant from the theater yet clearly fascinated by its unique properties, has blended them into his ultra-cinematic style. Possibly this theater fascination is connected with his histrionic self. He has appeared in several of his pictures, and in *Intervista* he is the center, amiable yet enjoying his performance.

He is not the only "self" in the film. We also get glimpses of the marvelous cinematographer, Tonino delli Colli, and the no less marvelous designer, Danilo Donati. This is part of Fellini's impulse to make his film be about itself.

A last note of first importance: as always in Fellini, the music matters. The score by Nicola Piovani acknowledges its debt to the late Nino Rota's scores for previous films; and it touches *Intervista* throughout with music-hall brio or with the peculiar grip of sentimental tunes—Fellini's cunning awareness that most of our most serious moments these days are bound up with pop tunes. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Editorial Play

Art and journalism may not be natural bedfellows, but ever since Euripides social-minded dramatists have been inclined to write editorials instead of plays. Against his better nature, Ibsen composed a few such editorials himself (notably *A Doll's House* and *Enemy of the People*), which made Bernard Shaw, that sometime journalist, wrongly assume "discussion" to be the quintessence of Ibsenism. You can always tell that a playwright is in an editorial mood when his language turns declarative: "I am angry against the Gods" (Euripides); "He is strongest who stands alone" (Ibsen); "Maybe we'll fix it so life won't be printed on dollar bills" (Odets); "Attention, attention must finally be paid to such a man" (Miller). This kind of broadcast prose usually indicates that the writer, caught up in an urgent issue, has momentarily become indistinguishable from his protagonist in pursuit of radical change.

Editorial drama can be a lively and useful form of playwrighting, but it's not the most textured or profound. F. Scott Fitzgerald famously called the mark of a really fine mind the ability to keep at least two ideas in your head at the same time. Since conflict (whether of thought or action) is the very essence of drama, you might say that command of dialectic is also the mark of a really fine playwright. Editorial writers, on the other hand, usually stop at thesis without encountering antithesis, which is to say, they are content with only one idea.

I suspect that Larry Kramer would be perfectly happy with a column on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*. His earlier play, *The Normal Heart*, in fact, was mainly about the rage of his autobiographical hero, Ned Weeks, over that newspaper's inadequate coverage of the AIDS crisis compared with the articles it devoted to Legionnaires' disease. Kramer is an AIDS activist—more recently (and lamentably) an AIDS victim. His playwrighting has consisted almost exclusively of an effort to raise media awareness of this plague so as to shame the government into committing sufficient resources to a cure.

This is a noble cause, which Kramer has pursued with force, constancy, and eloquence. He's not alone. AIDS-related plays now constitute a whole subsection of modern American drama: *As Is, Eastern Standard, The Baltimore Waltz, Lips Together, Teeth Apart, Falsettos*, and, pr[illegible] eminently, *Angels in America* are only a sampling. Sometimes, as in the case of Scott McPherson (*Marvin's Room*), the playwrights don't outlive the run of their plays. It is almost as if this dreadful scourge, which is killing so many of our dear theatrical friends, has assumed a presence in our drama similar to that of fate in *Oedipus* or venereal disease in *Ghosts*.

But AIDS is not only a lurking tragic inevitability, it represents an unsolved medical mystery in need of attention. And therein lies the critic's difficulty. How do you assess the artistic qualities of such an urgent social agenda? If the editorial function dominates Kramer's new play, **The Destiny of Me** (at the Lucille Lortel Theater), that is because the author sees AIDS exclusively as proof of an unjust society that must be shamed into action. Set, like so many modern plays, in a hospital room (is disease now the metaphor of our times?), the play begins with Ned Weeks engaging in clinical tests while the gay activists he leads picket outside. In his own mind at least, Ned has now assumed the role of homosexual messiah ("I can't save the world with my mouth shut"), enduring experimental treatment while awaiting his obit in the *Times*.

His enemy is "they"—the vast American majority that wants to "kill off all the faggots and niggers and spics.... Too many of us have been allowed to die. There's not one person out there that doesn't believe a genocide is going on." In this vaguely paranoid conspiracy fantasy, "they" even include the doctor and nurse who are trying to help him, whom he abuses for "rat-shit" cures and for being unwitting pawns in a homophobic American plot. Told that President Bush is eager to find a cure, he retorts, "He's brain-dead and you're brain-washed," while offering to donate to the president some of his tainted blood.

Running parallel with this hospital drama is a memory play about Ned's Jewish family—his brutal, unfeeling father, his bustling, possessive mother, his sympathetic, straight brother, and himself as a waggish, sensitive young gay. This, too, is a story of injustice and insensitivity. Dad punches him out for

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being a sissy ("I never wanted you. I should have shot my load in the toilet"), Mom is too passive, even brother Ben sends Ned to a shrink to "cure" him of his sexual condition. At the end, facing death, Ned informs his younger self of his blighted HIV-infected future, and they join in singing "Only Make Believe."

It is the makeup of this family, and probably the excessive length of the evening (three hours), that has led critics to compare Larry Kramer to Eugene O'Neill. His true kinship, however, is with Arthur Miller (with family ties to Clifford Odets, Tennessee Williams, and David Rabe as well). O'Neill, like most great dramatists, knows that no one is free from responsibility, and *A Long Day's Journey* concludes with the author's understanding and forgiveness for all his benighted characters, including the author's surrogate. But there is very little self-examination in *The Destiny of Me*, aside from the uninvestigated idea (anticipated in *The Normal Heart*) that gays have trouble finding love because they're always seeking sex. Kramer's enemy is invariably the Other, and his constant purpose is to induce, excavate, and heighten the audience's sense of guilt.

What the play lacks, in short, is O'Neill's existential tragic rhythm, a quality that Dennis Potter also managed to capture in yet another work about disease, *The Singing Detective*. Still, for all its self-absorption, self-exoneration, and self-importance, *The Destiny of Me* is never boring. Ned Weeks displays much the same vital energy as Osborne's Jimmy Porter, another relentless kvetch whose endless grievances kept the blood pulsing through his veins—though, in the case of Ned Weeks, his blood may be killing him.

Marshall Mason's Circle Repertory Company production, however, has too much vital energy. Instead of cutting *The Destiny of Me*, he has raced it, creating the technical clatter of a farce marathon. I found the tone and pace incongruous with a reflective memory play. Jonathan Hadary, as the older Ned Weeks, rattles his lines in a manner appropriate to the Broadway musicals that poster his hospital walls, and John Cameron Mitchell as his youthful self, though ingratiating, is often stuck in showtime. The ripening, red-haired, dark-voiced Piper Laurie is seriously miscast as a Jewish mother. David Spielberg as the father has convincing early moments, but his violent rages are embarrassingly staged. Peter Frechette as brother Ben ages well and manages the difficult feat of creating irregular details inside a square character. Oni Faida Lampley as Nurse Hanniman possesses authority and humor. But I didn't believe for a moment that Bruce McCarty's callow Doctor Della Vida had

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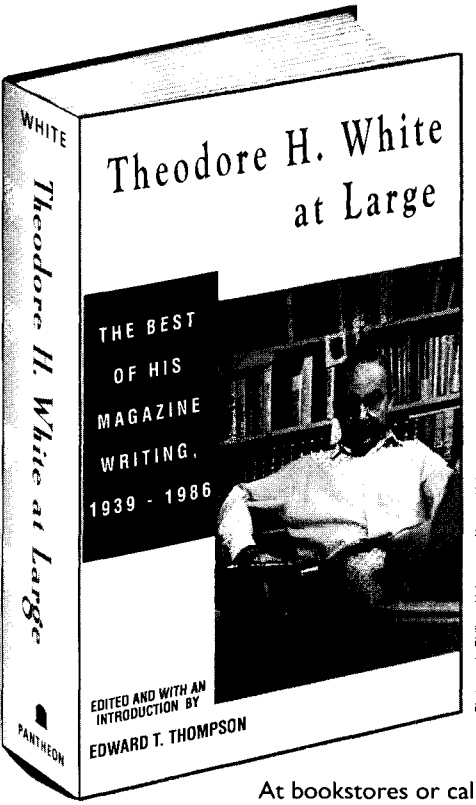
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ever had more than a few weeks of medical training. As for John Lee Beatty's setting, it is serviceable as an antiseptic hospital room but is transformed clumsily and unconvincingly in the domestic scenes. The same might be said for this editorialized play.

Wendy Wasserstein's **The Sisters Rosensweig**, newly opened at Lincoln Center, has quickly been announced for Broadway, where it should have opened in the first place. It is the female equivalent of *Conversations with My Father*, Neil Simon for the college set, a sit-com *Three Sisters*, already destined for Critics Circle Awards and anthologies like *Best American Plays of the Year*. My heart sank a little when the witty one-liners began popping ("Multiple divorce is a splendid thing, you get so many names to choose from"; "Love is love, gender is merely spare parts"). I had hoped, after *The Heidi Chronicles*, that my very gifted former student was shaking her witticism habit. *The Sisters Rosensweig* has a lot of charm, but it is a regression. I guess it's hard, in the precarious circus of American theater, to give up your trapeze.

Wasserstein's wit is not cruel, which makes her play at the same time endearing and somewhat toothless. Her technique is to create a character who looks at first like a stereotype, then to show the more complicated workings of the human heart. One can't help liking the person who creates this kind of material, even when it seems thin and predictable, so by its own internal measure, which is to be likable, *The Sisters Rosensweig* is a success. People will be entertained and will leave the theater feeling warm and wise, which are the requisites of a commercial hit.

The play is primarily about Jewish identity. Three sisters gather together in London to celebrate the eldest's fifty-fourth birthday. Sara (Jane Alexander) is a haughty, loveless banker who, scorning her religious background, is now seeing a vaguely anti-Semitic Englishman. Gorgeous (Madeline Kahn) is a New England housewife from West Newton, currently "schlepping the sisterhood around London." Pfeni (Frances McDormand), the youngest, is an activist journalist in love with a bisexual English stage director. Of these only Gorgeous is remotely satisfied with her sexual lot. The main action concerns Sara's reluctant attraction to a shamelessly Jewish furrier named Mervyn from Roslyn (Robert Klein) who prefers to call her Sadie. Although Pfeni's stage director eventually decides he prefers men, Sara gets to sleep with Mervyn ("That furrier has some very special skills—just call it fun fur"). And the character who once called herself "a cold bitter woman who has turned her back on her family, her religion, and her country" finally gets to acknowledge her Jewish roots.

The director, Daniel Sullivan, has mismatched three actresses who really don't seem like sisters, which makes the simulated Moscow Art Theater poses appear even more artificial. But the performances are creditable enough—in the case of Kahn even wonderful. Edgy, nervous, and slightly hysterical, with a voice that slides into bat shrieks, she invariably finds both the comedy and the poignancy in a character who could easily have become a suburban housefrau caricature. I found Alexander's Sara, though womanly, a trifle too coiffed, but so is the role. And his colorful character tempted John Vickery's English stage director into too much show-biz rodomontade. Klein's Mervyn, on the other hand, was a congenial loud mouth, a good-natured version of Alan King. But, oh, Wendy Wasserstein, after you've picked up all your awards, won't you throw away your safety net?

I've left no room for more than a mention of John Leguizamo's **Spic-O-Rama** at the Westside Theater, but it's brilliant. This is a one-man show about a dysfunctional Hispanic family ("not representative of all Latin families.... If your family is like this one, please seek professional help") in which Leguizamo plays all the male and female characters. It instantly hoists him into the pantheon of such sharp-eyed chroniclers of contemporary character as Eric Bogosian, Lily Tomlin, and Anna Deveare-Smith. Let me also briefly cite my colleague Robert Wilson's production of Büchner's **Danton's Death** at the Houston Alley Theater—one of the most beautiful (and surprisingly textual) events he has ever staged. With some strong exceptions, the acting in this extended death scene about French revolutionaries is less than overpowering, and the sound score is uneven. But Robert Auletta's haunting adaptation, John Conklin's gorgeous period costumes, and Wilson's sets, furniture, and lighting (with Stephen Strawbridge) combine to create exquisite verbal and visual images, evoking David, Ingres, and Daumier. The production also captures the timeless sense of what it means to be human in an editorial age. •

Gilligan's Island

BY CHRISTOPHER LASCH

Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan

(Harvard University Press, 252 pp., $19.95)

Feminists have always found themselves torn between arguments that minimize the importance of sexual differences and arguments that run the risk of exaggerating them. Early campaigns for women's rights rested on the first of these strategies. The objection that civic equality would unsex women proved so effective, however, that feminists began to shift their ground. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of them had come to favor the claim that access to the ballot box and the professions would enlarge the domain of women's distinctive capacity for love and nurture. Once women gained access to the world of men, they argued, ruthless competition would give way to care and compassion.

An argument based on sexual differences has the advantage of linking feminism to a sweeping vision of social improvement. But it comes with a price. It tends to reaffirm the very stereotypes that have held women back. It seems to reinforce the social expectation that women will be soft and gentle, when they need to become tough-minded and assertive. Is it possible to have things both ways? Without reviving old habits of submission, to insist that women speak "in a different voice"?

Carol Gilligan has been struggling with this question throughout her career. *In a Different Voice*, published ten years ago, was part of a new wave in feminist psychology, directed against theories of psychological development that (allegedly) equate maturity with individuation and separation and can thus interpret women's preference for connection and relatedness only as evidence of incomplete development. Much of this criticism was directed against Freud, who believed that "freedom consists of isola-

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tion," in the words of Jessica Benjamin, and that "denial of the need for the other" represents the only "route to independence."

Gilligan's primary target was not Freud but Lawrence Kohlberg, but she too objected to a "developmental litany," as she put it, that "intones the celebration of separation, autonomy, individuation, and natural rights." Since any deviation from this "masculine standard" could be dismissed as a "failure of development," the reigning psychological theories had the effect of giving scientific sanction to age-old beliefs about the inferiority of women. If women were judged by male standards, they would always come off looking second best. The only way to affirm women's equality, it appeared, was to insist on their difference.

Kohlberg traced moral reasoning through six distinct stages, culminating in respect for universal principles of justice such as the golden rule and the categorical imperative. The chief objection to his scheme is that it has so little to say about the conduct of life. Empty of substantive content, it does not tell us what is worth living or dying for. The principles Kohlberg wants us to honor are strictly procedural. They teach us to respect others' rights, but "the right" itself, according to Kohlberg, "is a matter of personal values and opinions." Kohlberg has no theory of goods as distinguished from rights. In effect, he makes toleration the test of moral growth, without explaining what ends toleration might serve beyond the preservation of a precarious social truce.

But Gilligan does not object to Kohlberg's theory because it is bland and noncommital, or because it takes for granted the "relativism of personal values and opinions," or because it requires a "corresponding emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus." She is Kohlberg's student as well as his critic. She too wants to promote cooperation and consensus. She appears to argue, however, that these ends are better served by a morality of caring and sharing than by a morality of rights and rules.

Gilligan accepts the conventional contrast between the "expressive" orientation of women and the "instrumental" orientation of men, but she resents the implication that concern for others, as opposed to a concern for abstract principles, signifies arrested development. Kohlberg saw only "conformity" in the idea that "good behavior is that which pleases or helps others." In his system, altruism represents a higher stage than egoism, but it still falls short of a morality that rests on abstract principles and pro-

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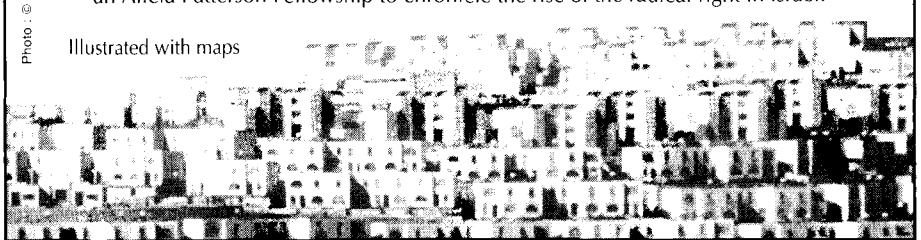

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* *Publishers Weekly*

RANDOM HOUSE

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cedures. Gilligan, on the other hand, distrusts abstract moral reasoning if it overrides the interpersonal context in which moral choices have to be made. Thus she refuses to see evidence of ethical immaturity in studies showing that girls will change the rules of a game in order to resolve disputes and "preserve relationships," in her words. The ability to nurture relationships, she thinks, is nothing to sneer at. If women speak a "distinct moral language" of their own, it is by no means a primitive dialect. Indeed, Gilligan gives the impression that it is a good deal more eloquent and expressive than the masculine dialect.

Her polemic against Kohlberg recalls the Romantic attack on instrumental reason, in which feeling was elevated above intellect, "feminine" mercy over "masculine" justice. It is the lingering influence of the Romantic tradition (evident once again in her new book, in the form of an idealized view of childhood) that probably explains her readiness to embrace sexual stereotypes that might otherwise invite a great deal of skepticism. As the psychologist John M. Broughton has pointed out, interviews conducted by Gilligan herself show that women comfortably employ the "supposedly 'male' language of rights," while men often fall into the idiom of care and compassion. One male subject, asked to define morality, said that it was "not taking advantage of other people, not hurting them." Another, asked what obligations he felt toward others, replied: "To be honest with them, not to do anything which would hurt them." Gilligan's distinction between a "connected" and a "separate" sense of self comes out very clearly in an interview in which the subject refers to "being with other people and getting close to people" as the "most meaningful thing for myself right now." Unfortunately for Gilligan's hypothesis of a "different voice" in women, the speaker turns out to be a man.

Unembarrassed by such evidence, Gilligan insists that "the male 'I' is defined in separation," and the feminine "I" in connection. She clings to this cliché even though it tends to encourage habits of self-effacement and submission in women. She herself recognizes the difficulty when she observes that women's gift for "caring" makes them reluctant to claim their rights. She agrees with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, to the point of reproducing Stanton's capital letters, that "SELF-DEVELOPMENT IS A HIGHER DUTY THAN SELF-SACRIFICE."

Having rejected Kohlberg's scheme of development without calling into question its underlying model of moral development through sequential stages, Gilligan has to propose a new model for women that proceeds in the opposite direction, from altruism to egoism. Women, she seems to be saying, need to learn what men have to unlearn: a healthy regard for their own interests.

When she interviewed women referred to her study by an abortion clinic, she found that they rationalized abortion on the grounds that bearing a child would have been a selfish choice. It was a step forward, Gilligan argues, when they came to admit that abortion served their own wishes and needs. Not that abortion represents, for that reason, the selfish choice; as long as women share this "conventional interpretation" of the alternatives, they continue to vacillate between self-condemnation and transparent, unconvincing attempts at self-justification. Development, for women, means coming to see the "limitation of the opposition itself," which is "self-blinding" because it equates self-assertion with selfishness and thus encourages women to live exclusively for others. It is a sign of moral progress when Gilligan's subjects decided that "you can't worry about not hurting other people; just do what is right for you." Another woman in Gilligan's study, speaking of her earlier outlook on moral issues, summarizes the morality Gilligan wants women to outgrow: "I thought that as long as I didn't hurt anybody, everything would be fine."

Gilligan's revision of Kohlberg appears to leave us with a symmetrical pattern of development in which the two sexes proceed by different routes to the same place, a respect for abstract "human rights." Notwithstanding her objection to the concept of rights (which she often trivializes by reducing rights to rules), Gilligan cannot do without it. Women's emancipation remains for her what it was for so many earlier feminists, a matter of claiming their rights. That it is also a matter of doing away with double standards is a point that she chooses to ignore.

The effect of her analysis is to reassert double standards of competence, performance, and moral development while demanding respect for women's rights. Like Kohlberg, she gropes for a morality that transcends the conventional opposition between egoism and altruism. But she does not understand (any more than he does) that the only escape from the polarity of egoism and altruism lies in the selflessness experienced by those who lose themselves in their work, in the effort to master a craft or a body of knowledge, or in the acceptance of a formidable challenge that calls on all their resources. It is only in purposeful activity that we find a suspension of egoism that goes beyond conventional self-sacrifice.

For those who view ethical problems from a narrowly social point of view, people absorbed in their work appear self-absorbed and therefore suspicious. In fact they are blissfully self-forgetful; and although they may neglect their social duties, it can be argued that their self-respect makes them better citizens than all the selfless social service in the world. From this point of view, the reason women are so preoccupied with questions of selfishness and self-sacrifice is that they have historically enjoyed so few opportunities for challenging activity of an impersonal character. Having lacked those opportunities, many of them understandably lack the confidence to throw themselves into arduous, risky pursuits the mastery of which is the best recipe, perhaps the only recipe, for self-respect.

Gilligan wants women to respect themselves, but she cannot seem to see that self-respect comes from meeting impersonal standards. She subscribes (as her new book makes clear) to the current notion, widely shared by those who write about "self-esteem," that people come to grief when they try to live up to standards set by someone else. She can conceptualize self-respect only as the satisfaction of "doing what is right for you"—a nebulous formula that invites the suspicion of ordinary, old-fashioned selfishness (masked as "self-development"), unless "right for you" includes the effort to pit your talents against a demanding ideal of perfection. Since perfection, for Gilligan, is a snare and a delusion, her idea of self-respect remains stunted and deformed. All she sees in the ideal of perfection is the risk of failure and damaged "self-esteem."

In spite of her disagreements with Kohlberg, Gilligan tends to identify respect for "human rights," as he does, with the higher stages of moral development. Like Kohlberg, she confuses respect with tolerance and compassion, thereby inverting the meaning of respect, usually reserved for the acknowledgment of others' capacities and achievements. For Gilligan, respect implies no more than an acknowledgment of their weakness—their susceptibility to pain, their right not to be hurt. When she speaks of self-respect, she often seems to mean merely that a woman needs to "claim the right to include herself among the people whom she considers it moral not to hurt." Though she is eager to shed the discourse of egoism and altruism, the injunction against inflicting injury still provides Gilligan's moral touchstone.

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She urges only that women extend this injunction against injury to themselves. In this way, she hopes, they can assert their "human rights" without masculinizing themselves or equating femininity, on the other hand, with self-sacrifice.

In *A Different Voice*, Gilligan repeatedly speaks of the issue facing women—the issue raised by the difficulty of distinguishing "caring" and "relatedness" from self-sacrifice—as a "conflict between integrity and care." In her vocabulary, however, integrity does not mean what it usually means. It serves her simply as a slogan, a synonym for the self-assertion that women lack. She invokes integrity again and again but seems indifferent to its connotations of honesty and courage. Integrity refers, above all, to the courage of your convictions. It describes Luther at the Diet of Worms: "I neither can nor will revoke anything, seeing that it is not safe or right to act against conscience." It describes Joan of Arc confronting her accusers (in Shaw's telling): "What God made me do I will never go back on; and what He has commanded or shall command I will not fail to do in spite of any man alive." At a less exalted level of moral heroism, it describes the refusal to give in to the line of least resistance, to follow the crowd, or to court popularity at the price of honesty and self-respect. This virtue, it should be added, has no gender. Men are no more exempt than women from the temptation to trim their sails to the wind; no more likely, therefore, to make integrity a way of life. Loyalty to a principle, a cause, or an idea—to the inner promptings of conscience—does not come any more easily to men than to women.

Pressures to conform are even stronger in the case of women, to be sure; and Gilligan's new book, although it does not explain them satisfactorily, provides a vivid picture of just how intense those pressures can be. Written in collaboration with Lyn Mikel Brown and with the support of a team of researchers, *Meeting at the Crossroads* rests on a five-year study of a private day school for girls, specifically on interviews with 100 girls between the ages of 7 and 18. Impressed with Gilligan's initial finding that women speak a moral language of their own, she and her colleagues decided to extend their research "further back into girls' childhood" in the hope of unraveling the "mystery in girls' development."

They visited a variety of schools and published selected interviews from time to time. In the course of the research leading to the present study, they became increasingly dissatisfied with "standard practices of psychological research," which put the girls on their guard and inhibited a "real relationship" between the research team and its subjects. When the researchers encouraged the girls to speak more freely, they found themselves "face to face with difficult questions of truthfulness and authenticity in relationships between girls and women." They found, in other words, that girls too often say what they think adults want to hear—especially, it might be added, when they are being interviewed. Conformity to adult expectations, they decided, explained why "lively," "outspoken" girls become increasingly timid as adolescents, lose confidence in themselves, suppress their own opinions, "pretend things are fine," and "smile all the time" in the hope of making themselves agreeable.

Here again Gilligan's data often seem to be at odds with her conclusions. She and Brown deplore the "self-silencing" that sustains a "patina of niceness and piety," but the impression conveyed by their description of school life is a good deal more grim than these words would suggest. Niceness and piety are not much in evidence at Laurel School in Cleveland. The social tone, moreover, is set not by adults, but by adolescent cliques and clubs with their gossip, their whispered secrets, and their rigorously enforced structure of popularity. The girl who establishes herself as a social arbiter among her classmates "takes them into her group," as one of them astutely observes, "and teaches them not to like certain people." The competition for status takes a heavy toll even on those who succeed. Believing that "it's not good to hurt someone," these girls can see all too clearly that popularity requires them to hurt people and that in most situations, therefore, someone will "feel bad, whichever decision I make." Those who refuse or fail to ingratiate themselves with the dominant cliques—the "leftovers," as one of them calls herself—become prematurely jaded and cynical, convinced that "the only person you can rely on is yourself."

Gilligan's early work celebrated women's "concern with relationships" as the source of their "morality of responsibility"; but the snobbery and the backbiting that prevail at Laurel School might well give her pause about the "human strength" of "affiliative ways of living." The ugly side of adolescent sociability suggests that a "web of relationships" can be suffocating, inhibiting, and oppressive rather than "creative and cooperative." A dawning awareness of this may help to account for Gilligan's occasional uneasiness, never clearly explained or absorbed into the structure of her analysis, with the sexual stereotypes that figured so prominently in *A Different Voice* and continue to reverberate in *Crossroads*.

She and Brown observe in passing that it seems "profoundly misleading" to describe women as "connected" and men as "separate." Such characteriza-

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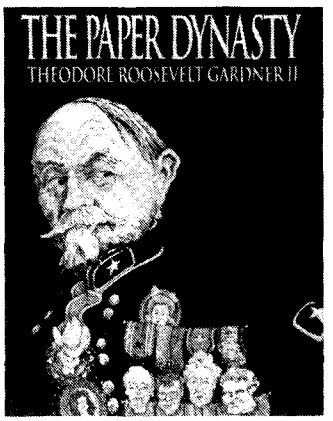

"Since I don't know any perfect men I'm buying it for my girlfriends." —Mia Farrow

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tions, they say, ignore the "depths of men's desire for relationship and the anger women feel about not having power in the world." But this is a trivial objection. They would have done better to remind themselves, on the strength of their own evidence, that women are just as likely as men to misuse power, to relish cruelty, and to indulge the taste for cruelty in enforcing conformity. Study of a girls' school would seem to provide the ideal corrective to sentimental views of women's natural gift for nurture and compassion. "Those who have experienced dismissal by the junior high school girls' clique," writes Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "could hardly, with a straight face, claim generosity and nurture as a natural attribute of women."

Brown and Gilligan would be uncomfortable, I suspect, with the suggestion that women and men are equals in their capacity not only for kindness but for cruelty. It is an article of faith, among those who claim to speak for the oppressed and exploited, that black people, say, cannot be accused of racism or that women should not be judged by "masculine" standards of justice. Early feminists refused to absolve their sisters in this way. Indeed they were sometimes accused of hating women, because they dwelled unsparingly on the petty tyrannies by means of which women sought to compensate themselves for the narrowness of their lives.

The demand for access to the great world of politics and learning derived its original force from the observation that narrow circumstances breed narrow minds. But when feminists began to argue for their rights on the grounds that it would give "maternal influence" a wider sphere, they sacrificed moral realism to political expediency. They turned conventional stereotypes to political advantage but lost the ability to explain what makes the world of women, unless it is integrated into a more impersonal world where the quality of ideas or workmanship counts for more than "relationships," so confining to the spirit, so productive of petty jealousies, so highly charged with envy and resentment.

In seeking to explain why adolescents lose the candor and the independence of girlhood, Gilligan and Brown ignore the tyranny exercised by those who control social eligibility and exclusion. They believe that if adolescents learn "to cover over their own feelings and hide what they know," it is because they have internalized the false ideal of femininity held up by a patriarchal culture. Adopting the "narrowing visions of nice and kind women" held up to them by their elders, they replace their own voices with the "foreign voice-overs of adults." "Injunctions to be nice," according to Gilligan and Brown, reduce high-spirited girls to young ladies, the epitome of propriety and decorum. "Culturally inscribed and socially institutionalized notions of womanhood" win out over "authenticity." The "strengths in girls' voices" become inaudible, silenced by "accepted norms of female behavior."

This explanation seems implausible on the face of it, in view of the intense competition for status that makes school life so harrowing for many girls—a competition in which "niceness" has very little relation to success. It is doubly implausible, this talk of decorous womanhood, in view of the inescapable influence of competing models of womanhood. The girls at Laurel School are not so completely isolated from the world around them, presumably, that they have escaped exposure to a feminism that challenges "accepted norms of behavior" at every point. If accepted norms of any kind can still be said to exist, they are probably shaped more directly by feminism than by the old ideal of feminine submission.

We should take care, however, not to exaggerate the influence of adult ideals, feminist or otherwise, on the contemporary subculture of adolescents. We should take particular care not to fall into a familiar idealization of the young, according to which the corrupting influence of the adult world gradually prevails over the spontaneity and charm of childhood. A long tradition, dating back to Rousseau, glorifies children as noble savages, unspoiled by adult inhibitions and self-censorship. A variant of this tradition, in fiction and folklore, takes the part of the tomboy against the social constraints conspiring to make her into a proper young lady. *Meeting at the Crossroads* takes some of its resonance from this genre. It tells a story many readers will dimly recall, in which prepubescent girls, enterprising and "psychologically astute," enjoy "genuine or authentic" relationships to those around them but are gradually forced to adopt the ways of civilization, betrayed by an "image of the perfectly nice and caring girl."

Gilligan and Brown read the annals of Laurel, then, as another chapter in the "conflict between integrity and care," with a subplot that vaguely alludes to *Little Women*, *The Secret Garden*, and other classic tales of enterprising girlhood. But the absence of adult ideals, not their ruthless imposition, is the real story here. The girls at Laurel suffer from the effects of generational segregation, the deflation of ideals, the loss of an impersonal public order. In most societies known to historians or to anthropologists, the young get an education by working alongside adults. The requirement that adolescents spend most of their time in school is a fairly recent innovation, closely linked to the rise of modern nation-states.

Formal schooling prolongs adolescence, and at the same time walls it off from unsupervised, pedagogically unmediated contact with the world of adults. Fortunately, schools are never wholly self-contained. Adolescents avid for knowledge of the world have always managed to evade pedagogical supervision and to acquire vicarious experience of adult ways, largely through the medium of unauthorized reading. Educational practice, moreover, is often inconsistent and contradictory. On the one hand, it seeks to discourage independent exploration on the part of the young. On the other hand, its attempts to inculcate "Americanism" through exposure to patriotic narratives—an important objective of schooling in the days before patriotism became suspect—tend to stimulate forms of curiosity about the past, about the realm of affairs and adventure, that easily escape pedagogical control.

It is only in our own time that schools have fully committed themselves to the dogma of immediacy, to the deadly notion that young people can be interested only in things directly touching their own lives. The replacement of historical narratives by the study of "social problems," the preference for literary works with a contemporary setting and an adolescent cast of characters, and the attempt to sanitize the curriculum by eliminating anything that might give offense all serve to discourage imaginative identification with images of the exotic or unfamiliar. Adolescents will not get much sense of a life beyond adolescence from a reading list limited to *Lord of the Flies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The girls at Laurel pay dearly for their isolation from the great world. Their idea of freedom is to "go somewhere of my own choice—like to Burger King or Wendy's." Their idea of education is "to get into college, and that's the only reason I'm here." Their vocabulary is pathetically reduced, their speech halting and clumsy. "I was like screaming on the phone.... I was like, 'I don't care,' you know." "She's like, 'I'm going to kill myself,' and I'm like, 'Don't kill yourself until morning, I'm really tired.'" "I saw them, and it's like, 'Oh, wow!' You know." "I decided I'd say yes and explain because that would be like the best thing to do." "Like everybody hates her in class." "You can't survive like alone, you can't like sit on a mountain and be

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alone." "Like if you are, I don't know, if you're sort of like thrown together with someone you try to like adapt to them, so I don't know."

These girls lack any sense of an impersonal order that exists independently of their wishes and anxieties. Not only the substance but also the manner of their speech testifies to the emptiness and unreality of a life that consists only of "relationships." The compulsive "like" conveys a disbelief in the objective reality of their surroundings. It blurs every boundary, retracts every assertion, and thus serves notice that the speaker is not to be held accountable for anything she says.

It would be a great mistake to jump to the conclusion that, because these girls are inarticulate, because their troubles are trivial on the scale of the world's troubles, and because most of them "have access to many of the privileges which this society offers those who are born into favorable conditions," as Brown and Gilligan delicately put it, their anguish is negligible or unreal. Their anguish is palpable, even though they cannot find words to express it. It derives from the same condition that makes them tongue-tied: the absence of impersonal aspirations, impersonal standards of comparison that would give their lives an element of continuity and shelter them from the vicissitudes of "relationships." Lacking any larger frame of reference, they invest all their emotions in the competition for acceptance by their peers. Social approval inevitably proves too precarious to carry such a heavy load. Friendships can hardly flourish when "you have to like keep your eyes open at all times." Self-protection becomes the overriding imperative.

Gilligan and Brown deplore the "standards of perfection" held up to girls by their elders. Laurel's malady, they insist, is the "seduction of the unattainable." Therapeutic criticism of standards and ideals, however, will only aggravate the condition they wish to cure. The same thing goes for the feminist assault on history as "his story," the assault on literary culture as a culture of dead white European males. Earlier feminists demanded admission to the republic of letters, but today many of them counsel a retreat into a world of women.

In the course of their work at Laurel, Brown and Gilligan organized a series of retreats, at which teachers and researchers agonized about the "absence of authentic communication" between girls and women. It never occurred to the participants to ask whether the students were getting anything for their minds to work on, anything that might set fire to the imagination, anything that might take them out of themselves. The teachers readily accepted the researchers' contention that they themselves, as one of the teachers said, "provided the models for ... behaving like 'good little girls.'" Having confessed their crimes, they commended the research team for bringing them all together. Everybody agreed that "the sanctuary of a retreat setting allowed us to understand our knowledge and feelings with a clarity not possible in hierarchical work settings." They "wept."

At one point, the teachers were shocked to hear that some of the girls at Laurel preferred to be taught by men, who "treat us like people" and "bring themselves into their teaching." They might have asked themselves just what it was that men brought to the classroom. The suggestion of a larger world? The hint of things undreamed of in Laurel's therapeutic philosophy? The exercise of impersonal authority? Instead the teachers and researchers asked themselves, all over again, why it was so difficult for girls and women to establish a "genuine relationship." The moment of reckoning passed, the circle of women closed again, the danger of illumination receded. The talk ended where it began. It ended, that is—as it will always end if women choose to retreat into a little world of their own—with a renewed commitment to openness, authenticity, cooperation, compassion, and care.

CHRISTOPHER LASCH is the author most recently of *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (W. W. Norton).

Desert Storm

BY HELEN VENDLER

Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land
by Herman Melville
edited by Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall, and G. Thomas Tanselle; historical and critical note by Walter E. Bezanson; historical supplement by Hershel Parker

(Northwestern University Press, 893 pp., $82.95, $22.95 paper)

Journals
by Herman Melville
edited by Howard C. Horsford with Lynn Horth

(Northwestern University Press, 805 pp., $69.95, $20.95 paper)

> Healed of my hurt, I laud the inhuman sea,
> Yea, bless the Angels four that there convene,
> For healed I am even by their pitiless breath,
> Distilled from wholesome dew named rosmarine.

The four winds of the compass rose—the puffing Angels of the old maps—had blown hard on Herman Melville during his actual sea journeys, and even more during his imaginative ones, from *Typee* to *Moby-Dick*. His divings to the interior had brought him (so his family thought) close to madness; his wife had even planned, with the aid of her family, to leave him, but decided against it. In this short epigram from the sequence "Pebbles," Melville declares himself healed by the same suffering that had hurt him; and as usual he invokes the Bible as source, as the heavens drop down dew (Proverbs 3:20; Deuteronomy 33:28). But Melville's later works suggest that the healing did not last.

In 1856-57 Melville's wife's family paid for a trip for Herman to the Mediterranean and the Near East, hoping that such an escape from his professional failures would restore his spirits. Melville's journals of that trip, together with those of an earlier one to London and a later one around Cape Horn, have been published together in one volume of great biographical interest in the ongoing Northwestern Newberry edition of Melville's writings. The chief literary result of Melville's trip to the Near East was his gigantic poem *Clarel* (the accent falls on the first syllable, as the scansion requires and as family tradition confirms). It was published in 1876, with financial help from Melville's uncle Peter Gansevoort, to whom it is dedi-

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cated; and was probably composed in the late '60s and early '70s, "midway between *Moby-Dick* (1851) and *Billy Budd, Sailor* (left unfinished in 1891)," as Walter E. Bezanson tells us.

Without Bezanson, we might not have known Melville's magnificent poem for a long time. In 1943 he completed a Yale doctoral dissertation on *Clarel*, and in 1960 he published the first modern edition of the poem, from which the new edition reprints his invaluable "Historical and Critical Note" and his ongoing commentary on individual lines and passages (updated by the current editors). Bezanson's generous scholarship made clear much in *Clarel* that would have been, to a modern reader, impenetrable. Several editors of the complete writings of Melville in this edition have grown old and died since the project was undertaken. It is a pleasure to think that Bezanson (from whose earlier edition so many of us first received the electric charge of *Clarel*) is alive to see this reissue and completion of his pioneering work.

What we now need is a *Selected Clarel*, since the whole poem is almost 18,000 lines long (says Bezanson, who must have counted it by hand). *Clarel* is written for the most part in four-beat couplets and quatrains, with interspersed songs. The four-beat lines come from Scott and Byron, and though some have not liked them, I find their driving momentum enormously appealing. Yet few modern readers are going to read *Clarel* all through, and it would be a service to the many Melville addicts in America to have a handy reduced *Clarel* to read. It is an episodic poem and could be well edited to a faithful but readable version, though not without losing many of its quintessentially original perceptions, descriptions, epigrams, ruminations, and queryings. A forlorn note by the current editor says that the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* dropped its excerpt from *Clarel* after teachers said their students couldn't understand it. (Myself, I suspect the teachers.)

Clarel tells the story of a ten-day trip through the Holy Land by a student called Clarel who is, as people would now say, the "absent center" around which everything revolves. That is, Clarel is the naive and ignorant youth who, for the first time, is exposed to a great number of people all of whom have different philosophical and religious convictions. The conflict of convictions is the drama of the poem. The poem records Melville's encounter with an immensity—the desert—that had for him the same fascination, in its pitilessness, as the sea. In the desert, as in the sea, human scale is lost, and the mind grapples for a larger scale by which to measure both life and thought.

Courtesy Harvard Semitic Museum

VIA DOLOROSA, JERUSALEM, c. 1867, PHOTOGRAPH BY FÉLIX BONFILS

Melville's first sight of Egypt, recorded in the *Journals* (whose erratic spelling I have normalized), brought out, as he descended into the Pyramids, his darkest speculations about the imaginative origins of Jehovah:

> A feeling of awe & terror came over me.... The Dust. Long arched way,—then down as in a coal shaft.... The stooping & doubling. I shudder at idea of ancient Egyptians. It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah. Terrible mixture of the cunning and awful.

Earlier, in Cairo, he had seen the collapse of Islam: "Ruined mosques, domes knocked in like stoven boats. Others, upper part empty & desolate with broken rafters & dismantled windows; (rubbish) below, the dirty rites of religion." When he got to the Holy Land, he was equally disgusted by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher:

> Ruined dome—confused & half-ruinous pile.—Labyrinths & terraces of mouldy grottos, tombs, & shrines. Smells like a dead-house, dingy light.... Pilgrims entering & prostrating themselves before the anointing-stone of Christ, which veined with streaks of a mouldy red looks like a butcher's slab.... You enter the tomb.... Wedged & half-dazzled, you stare for a moment on the ineloquence of the bedizened slab, and glad to come out, wipe your brow glad to escape as from the heat & jam of a show-box. All is glitter & nothing is gold. A sickening cheat.

And yet, Melville found that "a sort of plague-stricken splendor reigns in the painted & mildewed walls around." As he went out into the Judean desert, his horror and awe made his recording pen stumble in haste: "I have little doubt, the diabolical landscapes great part of Judea must have suggested to the Jewish prophets, their terrific theology." When he tried to sum up his responses to the Holy Land, they were disturbing:

> No country will more quickly dissipate romantic expectations than Palestine—particularly Jerusalem. To some the disappointment is heart sickening.
>
> Is the desolation of the land the result of the fatal embrace of the Deity? Hapless are the favorites of heaven.

When Melville arrived at Mount Patmos in Greece, the scene of St. John's *Revelations*, all his accumulated religious grief stored up from the Holy Land burst out in the journal, as he excoriated the "Higher Criticism" whose advocates had applied scientific, historical, and hermeneutic investigative processes to the narratives of the Bible:

> Patmos is pretty high, & peculiarly barren looking. No inhabitants.—Was here again afflicted with the great curse of modern

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travel—skepticism. Could no more realize that St. John had ever had revelations here, than when off Juan Fernandez, could believe in Robinson Crusoe according to Defoe. When my eye rested on arid height, spirit partook of the barrenness. Heartily wish Niebuhr & Strauss to the dogs.—The deuce take their penetration & acumen. They have robbed us of the bloom.

From "the great curse of modern travel—skepticism," the poem *Clarel* takes its energy. The young Clarel meets both foreigners and other Americans (including one, named Vine, whom Bezanson and others identify very reasonably with Hawthorne). He meets free thinkers, believers, and atheists; fellow Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims; Derwent (an Anglican priest), Mortmain (an ex-revolutionary from the Paris of 1848), and Ungar (an ex-officer of the Southern Confederacy who is part-Indian); a Druse, a Protestant convert to Judaism, a Catholic priest, an Italian hunchback, an irreverent Jewish geologist, monks at the monastery of San Saba in the Judean desert, and solitary anchorites. (Bezanson supplies a critical index of thirty-two characters, of whom ten are "major.")

These all express their several convictions, which swirl about the head of the bewildered Clarel like so many tempests of belief. Clarel is the innocent boy that Melville once was, before the whaling ship became his "Yale College and [his] Harvard"; but Clarel learns from the desert rather than from the sea. Rolfe (another principal character) represents an idealized adult Melville in his most balanced and benign mood, observing with tolerant understanding the baffled veerings of his young companion. But in the cluster of what Bezanson names (wrongly, I think, though it is Ungar's self-ironic word) "the Monomaniacs"—the ex-revolutionary Mortmain, the ex-Confederate Ungar—we see not (as Bezanson would have it) merely "the darker elements of Melville's sensibility," as though such things could be separated from our sense of Melville whole, but rather Melville's truest insights into the human condition.

Thus we read in the journals Melville's thoughts as he tasted the Dead Sea water:

> From on beach & pebbles like slaver of mad dog—smarting bitter of the water,—carried the bitter in my mouth all day—bitterness of life—thought of all bitter things—Bitter is it to be poor & bitter, to be reviled, & bitter are these waters of Death, thought I.

It is reflections like these that Melville's critics—less tormented than he—feel free to criticize. The editor of the *Journals* says that Melville's "pervasive skepticism ... leads to rhetorical overkill, as in the overwrought passage on the bitterness of the Dead Sea ..., or to mere intellectual petulance, as in the depreciation of Niebuhr and Strauss for destroying the romance of myth." And he adds that confined places "provoke a nervous timorousness in the once fearless sailor." These remarks seem to me badly mistaken. The middle-aged Melville is not the boy of *Typee*. He sees more, and he knows more. One might as well speak of "rhetorical overkill" in *King Lear* or of "intellectual petulance" in *Hamlet*. Do not the middle-aged and the old have a right to views that youth might find too dark?

It is Melville's own considered religious views, and his worst political fears, that we hear coming from the mouths of Mortmain and Ungar. Rolfe attempts, for example, to persuade Ungar that the New World offers hope:

> The vast reserves—the untried fields;
> These long shall keep off and delay
> The class-war, rich-and-poor-man fray of history.

But Ungar, who has seen the Civil War, replies:

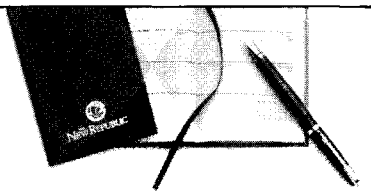
> Yours seems a reasonable tone;
> But in the New World things make haste:
> Not only men, the *state* lives fast—
> Fast breeds the pregnant eggs and shells,
> The slumberous combustibles
> Sure to explode. 'Twill come, 'twill come!
> One demagogue can trouble much:
> How of a hundred thousand such?
> And universal suffrage lent
> To back them with brute element
> Overwhelming? What shall bind these seas
> Of rival sharp communities
> Unchristianized?

Rolfe, admitting unwillingly that the several rival communities of the New World may explode into war, asks if peace may not come once war subsides. Ungar has no such hope; he speculates that America will simply be composed of "myriads playing pygmy parts— / debased into equality":

> Dead level of rank commonplace:
> An Anglo-Saxon China, see,
> May on your vast plains shame the race
> In the Dark Ages of Democracy.

Ungar's hearers are forced to agree: "Columbus ended earth's romance: / No New World to mankind remains!"

These dark passages may now seem more realistic and less "monomaniacal" than they appeared in 1943 to Bezanson completing his thesis; the wonder to me is that the current editor of the journals finds Melville's darker observations "overwrought." It is true that Melville's family feared for his sanity and consequently sent him abroad; it is even true



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that Melville jested at his own melancholy; but critics should beware, I think, of confusing psychological stress with considered reflection. Bitter thoughts were not new to Melville. There are enough and to spare in *Moby-Dick*.

The concentric clusters of ideologically determined personages surrounding the progressively disabused Clarel make up one of the two principal inventions of the poem. The second, and perhaps the greater, invention is the succession of landscapes that constantly recede before us as we move with the pilgrims on their pilgrimage. These have majestic effect even to one who has never seen their actual counterparts, as I had not when I first read *Clarel*. Now that I have seen Jerusalem and the Judean desert and the Dead Sea and the mountains of Moab, Melville's descriptions (so truncated in the journals, so wonderfully expanded in the poem) return with double power. Melville is the most robust of the major American poets, and his intensity of response, coupled with his unremitting vigor of metaphor, inspire passages of description in *Clarel* as good as many in *Moby-Dick*.

It is in reading the landscape passages that we begin to know the narrator—himself always undescribed and unnamed—of this epic poem. He has lived a long and appalling life, one of doubt and disappointment, in which experiences at sea created the formative layer of knowledge to which he has recourse again and again. Almost every sight in the desert reminds him of a corresponding view at sea; and events in the desert remind him of comparable incidents at sea. In the passage "Of Deserts," we find a characteristic observation from the narrator:

> Sands immense
> Impart the oceanic sense:
> The flying grit like scud is made:
> Pillars of sand which whirl about
> Or arc along in colonnade,
> True kin be to the water-spout.
> Yonder on the horizon, red
> With storm, see there the caravan
> Straggling long-drawn, dispirited;
> Mark how it labors like a fleet
> Dismasted, which the cross-winds fan
> In crippled disaster of retreat
> From battle.

The unrelenting stoniness of the Holy Land, like the limitless waste of the ocean, seems native to some disillusioned minds. Who can doubt that in describing such "wretches undone," Melville, sent abroad with family money, virtually cast out of his own house into the Judean desert, was describing himself?

> Yet man here harbors, even he—
> Harbors like lizard in dry well,
> Or stowaway in hull at sea
> Down by the keelson; criminal,
> Or penitent, or wretch undone,
> Or anchorite, or kinless one,
> Or wight cast off by kin. [These]
> Find here, on native soil, the pith;
> And leaving a shrewd world behind—
> To trances open-eyed resigned—
> As visionaries of the Word
> Walk like somnambulists abroad.

At the end of *Clarel*, the young hero finds his beloved, Ruth, and her mother dead, either from disease or from grief at the death of Ruth's father. Ruth has always been an unreal figure; and Clarel himself is rather pallid (except in the passages of his unrequited love for the mysterious Vine). The poem winds down through Passion Week—"Each shrine a dead dismantled bower"—as Melville meditates on a post-tragic state that yet is full of unrest, like a coal mine after an explosion:

> Here divine
> No peace; ignition in the mind
> Announced is by the rush, the roar:
> These end; yet may the coal burn on
> Still slumberous burn beneath the floor
> Of pastures where the sheep lie down.

And though pilgrims throng to celebrate Easter day, Clarel's response is a desolate one:

> The cheer, so human, might not call
> The maiden up; *Christ is arisen*:
> But Ruth, may Ruth so burst the prison?

After Clarel vanishes from sight into Jerusalem, murmuring, "Never comes to me / A message from beneath the stone," the narrator writes a Shelleyan close to the epic, invoking the Melville family's heraldic motto, *Denique Coelum*, "Heaven at Last" (itself, as the editors tell us, "an old Crusaders' cry" used previously by Melville in his novel *White-Jacket*):

> But through such strange illusions have
> they passed
> Who in life's pilgrimage have baffled
> striven—
> Even death may prove unreal at the last,
> And stoics be astounded into heaven.

This is Melville's last word on the bitterness awakened in him by the religion into which he was born—the Christian promise and its eventual betrayal. But he had glimpses from his youthful stay in the Pacific islands of another way of being, in which sin and guilt would have played a lesser part. He wrote, in the journal's single most reckless fragment: "J. C. should have appeared in Tahiti." After writing it, he crossed it out. Yet he could not resist reinscribing it in *Clarel*, as Rolfe says that not stony Bethlehem, but Tahiti, should have been the birthplace of Christ:

> To me
> That vine-wreathed urn of Ver, in sea
> Of halcyons, where no tides do flow
> Or ebb, but waves bide peacefully
> At brim, by beach where palm trees grow
> That sheltered Omai's olive race—
> Tahiti should have been the place
> For Christ in advent.

But Melville, like Hawthorne and Dickinson, was a Calvinist to the marrow, one for whom a calm stoicism was in the end unnatural:

> Unmoved by all the claims our times avow,
> The ancient Sphinx still keeps the porch of
> shade;
> And comes Despair, whom not her calm
> may cow,
> And coldly on that adamantine brow
> Scrawls undeterred his bitter pasquinade.

Clarel is a repository of "all the claims" of Melville's time, as "Luther's day expand[s] to Darwin's year." Its enormous interest in man and nature, its driven ambition to incorporate all forms of ancient and modern belief, its bitter pasquinades and its exalted after-shine of faith, its scorn of the slippery compromises of religious modernism, its respect for genuine faith even while it condemns the rivalries of creeds, its refusal of any palliative morsel for itself, its human sympathy for the life and death of Jesus, its riveting landscapes and seascapes, and its sheer monumentality make it one of the lasting documents of American culture. Its fascinating half-glimpsed narrator, with his idiomatic, fearless, and torrential language, deserves to be better known.

The editors, beginning with Walter Bezanson, whose reverence for Melville's labors has induced their own, have added invaluable notes and illustrations, making the poem and the journals once again living texts. How is it, we might ask, that we prize our own best culture so little? Will the *Norton Anthology* reconsider? It seems too much to hope for. *Clarel* may remain, like Jerusalem as we last see it in the poem, a tomb of culture:

> Here the city old,
> Fast locked in torpor, fixed in blight,
> No hum sent forth, revealed no light:
> The valley slept—
> Obscure, in monitory dream
> Oppressive, roofed with awful skies
> Whose stars like silver nail-heads gleam
> Which stud some lid over lifeless eyes.

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Lend the Money and Run

By Michael Lewis

Capitalist Fools: Tales of American Business, from Carnegie to Forbes to the Milken Gang by Nicholas von Hoffman

(Doubleday, 313 pp., $22.50)

Money of the Mind: Borrowing and Lending in America from the Civil War to Michael Milken by James Grant

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 513 pp., $27.50)

In the summer of 1991 Judge Marvin A. Holland, presiding over his courtroom in Brooklyn, addressed a group of newly bankrupt Americans. "I don't want anyone to leave this court feeling uncomfortable, guilty, or ashamed just because you just went through bankruptcy," he said, as he discharged them from their obligations. "I think you have a right to feel good about it. You should walk out of here with your head held up high. You should feel proud because you've done it—you've put your problems behind you. You now have some options about what to do with the rest of your life because those debts that were burying you are all behind you now." The incident was reported by *Newsday*, which also mentioned that the people in the crowd at the back of the courtroom sniffled and brushed away tears.

As this very post-'80s scene unfolded, at least two American critics and scolds were finishing books that would explain how the financial '80s happened in the first place. In matters of credit and sex we are at once libertines and puritans, so it is hardly surprising that just as our spendthrifts were exiting, our killjoys were moving in. Nicholas von Hoffman's most recent effort could well become one of those texts held up in fifty years' time to show how violently the mood turned against business at the end of the 1980s. It is packaged by its publishers as an attempt to put modern American business practices into historical context, but it is less a work of history than a vengeful essay in which the dead are selectively called upon to bludgeon the living.

Notwithstanding his choice of title, von Hoffman is far less concerned with what was foolish about the '80s than with what was venal. The sheer rudeness of his assault is refreshing, given the stilted courtesy of most business writing. The tone of the enterprise put me in mind of a keenly intelligent lunatic ranting on a streetcorner. As you try to avoid him by crossing the street he calls out, "The brain cells of corporations are being clogged by well-connected idiots who jog, play tennis, and are free of dandruff." In response to your nervous laugh he says, "The heads of half the CEOs in America are simply knots tied above the neck to keep their bodies from falling apart." You're hooked.

It would take a thousand corporate public relations hacks a hundred years to repel all of von Hoffman's attacks, which can be fairly summarized by the proposition that everything in America is getting worse. Although he doesn't say when things started to get worse, he does say why. Things are getting worse because America's leading businessmen are morally and commercially inferior to those of the past. The book contains many, many passages like this:

> One of the contrasts between the famous Wall Street types of our day, a Warren Buffett, a Henry Kravis, or a Carl Icahn, and those of the past like Morgan or Shiff, is that today's herd are mindless grazing ruminants, sheep or cows with no other thought in mind but the instinctual urge to get on to the next piece of tender green. The great financiers, certainly Morgan and Shiff themselves, addressed the worst business problems of their time and tried to do something about them.

This is von Hoffman's working theory, and it strikes me as badly misleading. It fails to stand up even to the internal evidence of his own book. For a start, the attitudes of the robber barons—stripped of von Hoffman's apologies for them—seem, as they were, even more anti-social than those of their latter-day counterparts. There is nothing in the '80s to match the barbarity of Henry Clay Frick's motto: "I have always had one rule. When a workman sticks up his head, hit it." After killing several workmen who dared to raise their heads, Frick wrote to Andrew Carnegie, "We had to teach our employees a lesson, and we have taught them one they will never forget." Richard B. Mellon's sense of the commonweal is nicely captured in his famous remark, "You couldn't run a coal mine without machine guns." And it was Commodore Vanderbilt who first said, "The public be damned." Does anyone seriously doubt that any of these men would have been quite capable of doing his share of the damage had he come of age on Wall Street in 1983?

I could not help but think that von Hoffman armed himself with illusions about the past to reinforce his disillusion with the present; it follows necessarily from his belief that everything is getting worse that everything was once better. (Did Upton Sinclair romanticize the South Sea Bubble even as he demonized J. P. Morgan in *The Money-Changers*? Will some future journalist, alienated from post-postmodernity in 2050, argue that the founders of Oxygen Inc. are two-bit chiselers beside the glorious Michael Milken?) That is not to say that his disillusion is unjustified, only that it is misguided.

The gist of his benign view of the past is that "the robber barons had a violent robustness about them. Regardless of their crimes, their accomplishments were at least as impressive as their villainies, something which cannot be said of Messrs. Icahn, Pickens et alii." He may be on to something, so long as et alii is defined to exclude William Gates, Stephen Jobs, and others who might be more favorably compared with the titans of nineteenth-century manufacturing. He's surely right that a lot of people in the last decade or so enriched themselves without seeming to enrich society. However, he is just as surely wrong about why. The beauty of free market capitalism is that it does not require anything more than ruthless self-interest from its most ruthlessly self-interested citizens. When the system works properly they enrich us all by enriching themselves, without giving the matter a great deal of thought. If that is no longer true it is a sign not that they are less moral, but that the invisible link between private gain and the public good has been severed.

Von Hoffman doesn't care to dwell on the connection in business between behavior and incentives. ("Free markets are necessary," he writes, a little oddly, "but business and business organization, which are not the same, are more impor-

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tant.") But the starting point of any reasoned discussion of the '80s is that the people who caused the most damage were responding rationally and, in the main, legally to market forces. Many of them even had high-minded justifications for their actions; Michael Milken brought tears to the eyes of grown businessmen when he spoke of the way junk bonds were making it possible for managers to buy their corporations. The havoc wreaked by American tycoons had far less to do with erosion in their character—which to my way of thinking has always been slightly suspect—than with the hair-brained network of financial road signs guiding their behavior.

How these were erected is largely the subject of James Grant's new book. His more secular explanation of the '80s breaks down conveniently into two narratives of unequal length, the shorter one being the history of the dollar. The modern history of our currency has been, until recently, one of debasement. The Gold Reserve Act of 1934 inflated the dollar by a third in terms of gold and offered a clear indication of what was to come. What is most interesting in Grant's retelling of this early battle between debtors and creditors, ending in the Supreme Court with a 5-4 victory for the former, is the indignation generated by the very idea of inflation. The chief beneficiary of inflation was, then as now, the U.S. government. In his dissenting opinion, Justice James C. McReynolds wrote:

> It is said the United States have realized profits amounting to $2.8 billion. But this assumes that gain may be generated by legislative fiat. To such counterfeit profits there would be no limit; with each new debasement of the dollar they would expand. Two billions might be ballooned indefinitely—to twenty, thirty, or what our will. Loss of reputation for honorable dealing will bring us unending humiliation; the impending legal and moral chaos is appalling. Just men regard repudiation and spoliation of citizens by their sovereigns with abhorrence; but we are asked to affirm that the Constitution has granted power to accomplish both.

In ensuing years that sentiment was largely lost to habit. The postwar monetary system fashioned at Bretton Woods left the dollar pegged to gold at $35 an ounce, and all other currencies pegged to the dollar. Unfortunately, the volume of world trade grew far more rapidly than the supply of gold, so that there was a perpetual shortage of gold-backed dollars to finance the exchange of goods. The choice we faced—known as Triffin's Dilemma, after the economist who first articulated it—was either to restrain world trade or to print more dollars. We printed more dollars. "What the founders of Bretton Woods had inadvertently done," Paul Volcker wrote in his monetary memoirs, *Changing Fortunes*, "was to rig up a world monetary system dependent upon American deficits, the very same deficits that everyone came to decry in the 1960s as destabilizing." A world rightly suspicious of our ability to stand behind our gold pledge drained American gold stocks until, in 1971, Richard Nixon finally announced that the dollar was backed by nothing more than our word. "This action will not win us any friends among the international money traders," he said.

The truth was precisely the opposite—the current system of floating exchange rates has been one of the most consistent sources of profit for international money traders. What Nixon should have said is, "This act will not win us any friends in the American middle class." Once we left the gold standard, our rate of consumer inflation rose steadily from 3.24 percent in 1971 to 13.17 percent in 1979. While people on fixed incomes suffered, the owners of capital found ways to protect themselves. It was no coincidence that during the 1970s there was, at the top of our society, a noticeable shift in attitudes toward debt, for which we are still paying. The way to hedge oneself against the ever lightening currency was to borrow dollars today that could be repaid with less valuable dollars tomorrow. Thus another taboo began to fall; at fashionable dinner parties on the Upper East Side rich men whispered to the women on their left their plans to "get leveraged." Small wonder.

The single event that has largely defined our turbulent financial times was not a stock market crash or a felony conviction. It was the moment that the Federal Reserve Board by a vote of 4-3 decided to stop the presses, effective October 6, 1979. One only slightly cockeyed way to view much of the ensuing financial chaos—the savings and loan crisis, the Third World debt crisis, the bond market jamboree, the twin alps of our budget and trade deficits—is as the natural offspring of the marriage of a sound monetary policy begun by Volcker and a pattern of national behavior premised on an ever inflated dollar. For the next decade individuals, corporations, and governments would continue to borrow dollars they could afford to repay only so long as those dollars continued to lose value.

Thus when the honor of the currency was restored, the dishonor of the banking system was exposed. The longer part of Grant's book deals with what he calls "the democratization of lending." To far better effect than von Hoffman, he uses the ancients as a standard against which to measure the moderns. The pillars of nineteenth-century banking believed that the source of credit was moral. High reputation was the nineteenth-century

Flâneur

New York without him never is the same:
no late, long lunches at the Giglio,
no phone tag, dog talk, aimless walks
and lubricated nights that fuel
Roman invective, accurate and cruel:
the moment bleeding at its yellow roots
in lines as fitted as his London suits,
signs for the unsuspecting that they knew
a sole survivor of the Happy Few.

Who wears street clothes anymore? Who shoots
his cuffs and stuffs his napkin in his collar?
Who pans for hours down Broadway, secret scholar
of glamours, powers, frauds, cupidities,
then cuts and swivels to his neon screen
to pin them down, *simplex munditiis?*
Man of qualities without illusions
who trades in them with savage sleight-of-hand,
who makes a virtue of a boutonniere,
who stares the crowd down . . . How did Baudelaire
define the dandy: setting sun,
Hercules on welfare, aristocracy of one,
seer in contacts who acknowledges
that love is time and money and disdain
is the last refuge of a man in pain . . . .

Freddy, New York is dying on the vine.
She needs a surgeon for her cankered heart,
a cold Cavafy for her evening.
Your painted lady wants you home
from the fleshpots of your Rome
for a last glass of Old Rarity.
Tap in your million-dollar shoes,
put the old poses to the test;
your nose will lead you where the shooting is
because they cost, because they are the best.

Jonathan Galassi

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substitute for the backing of the full faith and credit of the U.S. government. When, at the end of the last century, the president of Chemical Bank was asked the secret of his success, he replied, "The fear of God." Grant reminds us early and often of the founding taboos of our once sound banking system; real estate lending, for example, was forbidden in the National Bank Act of 1864.

With the creation of national deposit insurance in 1933, the American banker was at least partly freed from the ordinary discipline of the marketplace. Grant documents the hostility voiced by good bankers toward the whole notion of deposit insurance from the moment the idea was first suggested in the early nineteenth century. Over the years it had been rejected repeatedly, for all the right reasons. When a predecessor to the current system came before the Senate in 1913, for example, it was shot down by Senator John W. Weeks of Massachusetts. "Mr. President," he said, speaking to the chamber, "this whole system, in my judgment, is the confiscation of good character. It is putting a man without reputation or record on the same level as a man who has a record and reputation."

Of course, the old system was unfair; it discriminated against swindlers and fools—the morally challenged. The new system by contrast was wonderfully egalitarian. In 1954 Manufacturers Hanover abandoned the marble temple for a glass box on the corner of 43rd and 5th, so that everyone might glimpse the door to the vault from the sidewalk. In 1960 Citibank entered the business of making loans against commercial real estate. Playing the role of Puritan at the peep show, Grant has an almost obscene amount of fun charting the subsequent decline of lending—and, to his mind, moral—standards. He offers up racy passages from unsound junk bond promotional literature accompanied by lurid photographs of dogs receiving credit cards in the mail. He tells the story of the 12-year-old boy who came home from camp one '80s summer to find his new gold Mastercard with a $5,000 line of credit. "I jumped up and down and said 'wow'—the hologram on it was cool," the boy told *The Washington Post*. "But it sure made me wonder about who was running that bank."

The boom in consumer lending in itself was less interesting than what it implied about the attitudes of lenders and borrowers. The same leveling instinct that made it possible for a dog to get his paws on a credit card also made it possible for a man with no reputation to buy large office buildings and even larger corporations. More than one-third of the office space ever built in America was constructed in the 1980s; the newer and more lavish the skyscraper, the more likely it is to have been financed with money that should never have been lent. And by now everyone can name a company or two that went belly up in a leveraged buyout. What is less well understood is that von Hoffman's villains, who engineered these transactions, could never have gotten their vise grip on corporate America without the bankers' help. In short, a lot of the more socially disruptive business of the recent past emerged directly from the prolonged decline in lending standards. The river may have jumped channels in the 1980s, but the erosion of the banks had been going on for decades.

The first conclusion to be drawn from Grant's superb narrative is that lapses in moral standards in American business have been at least partly underwritten by the U.S. government. They have occurred for the simple reason that they have paid; an economist might say that in the 1980s the opportunity cost of socially responsible behavior rose. It is too much to expect people who live to make money to resist the temptation to make a lot of it quickly. So long as it is possible to place large, socially destructive bets with other people's money, keeping the winnings for oneself, someone will do it, no matter how badly mauled he may be by angry journalists. It follows that if you seek to improve the morals of financiers, you have got to begin with the economic incentives that caused their decay in the first place.

No doubt we are perfectly capable of finding our way back to a prelapsarian state of financial integrity. The question remains whether we really want to. Financial irresponsibility permeates our national life at every level, starting at the top. In response to a query about the national debt, Thomas Gale Moore, a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, said: "We can pay off anybody by running a printing press, frankly. So it's not clear to me how bad that [the transition to net debtor status] is." Perhaps even then, in 1988, the national debt had grown so large that the benefits of reneging on it exceeded the costs. If it was true then, it is even truer now. You can just about imagine the final scene: 250 million people gathered in front of their televisions to hear the president's announcement. "I don't want anyone to leave this country feeling uncomfortable, guilty, or ashamed," he says, "just because you just went through bankruptcy. . . ." •

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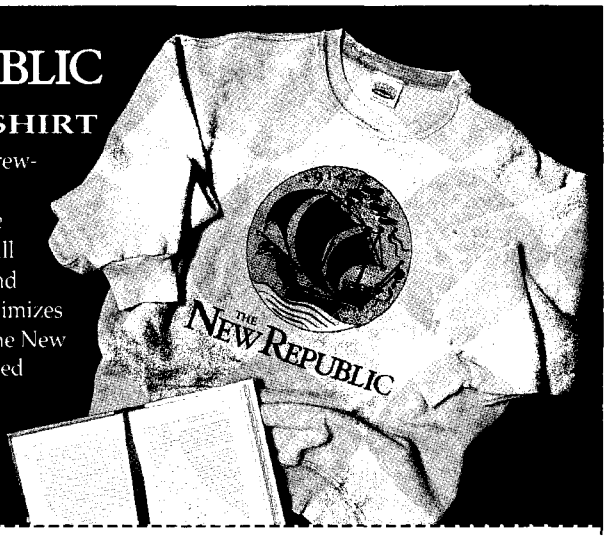

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

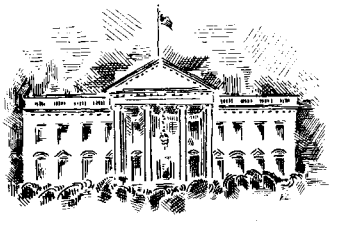
Alice and Mary

"I HAVE TWO BABIES. I HOPE THEY may never know how warmly at this moment I hate them. I have a husband; we were married because we were very much in love—and I hate him too.... It is all the fault of the children. I wanted children very much.... But I find that I am not the only woman who for months after a baby is born has an aching body and a dull mind and a defective sense of humor. During this period one's husband is very fatherly toward one, and one begins to feel the small asp of hate nipping one's heart." Alice Austin White wrote this venomous and anguished confession, "A Middle-Class Wife," for TNR in January 1917. By now her two babies must be grandparents, perhaps recounting for their children's children cozy stories of their early years at home with Grandma Alice.

"MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE A BABY," writes Mary Evans, who has just moved to "a respectable suburb." "It belongs to both of us. We also have jobs and a nurse. It was not long before I learned that this was wrong." Her piece, "The Business of Being a Mother," appeared in TNR the following year. Mary doesn't feel the asp of hate nipping her heart. Her husband, remarkably, shares in the bathing, the bottles, and the cooing, and the live-in nurse manages the rest. The other mothers on the block disapprove—although they anxiously solicit the advice of Mary's nurse. "I have learned my neighbors' creed," she writes. "It is this: I believe in the holiness of motherhood and the maternal instinct; I glory in them.... I have no patience with women who shrink from their duty as mothers simply because they can perform some other work better.... Such mothers ... constitute a challenge and a danger to all true mothers, and should, I believe, be looked upon with suspicion and distrust."

I WISH THESE TWO WOMEN HAD been around to lend a little astringency to Campaign '92. I came across their articles, buried deep in crumbling volumes of TNR, a few weeks before Election Day, when I was feeling dispirited about the many hours spent during the campaign discussing that revolutionary idea: mothers in the workplace. Alice and Mary would have been appalled. Three-quarters of a century later, feminists and the media couldn't stop marveling over the fact that a few dozen women were running competitive races for the House and Senate. Then there was the spectacle of the two major candidates vying with each other to devise the more pious tribute to the joys of family life. And, of course, the withering rebuke Hillary Clinton received for blurting out that women should be more than appendages to their husbands' careers.

OBVIOUSLY, MUCH HAS CHANGED since Alice and Mary wrote about the hidden horrors of domesticity. Alice concluded her piece by proposing a kind of nursery, which, she speculated, would free women to pursue some semblance of an independent life, and even broaden their children's narrow universe. Today, working wives, day care, and nannies much like Mary's nurse are the norm. But are the wives of the '90s the fulfilled, intellectually challenged women of Alice's and Mary's dreams? Most are too exhausted to think about it, and those who *are* relatively content don't dare admit it. Perversely, they've become the most receptive audience for scare stories about the array of maladies, syndromes, and complexes that sooner or later, we are told, strike down all working women: biological time clocks, glass ceilings, sexual harassment, co-dependency, backlash, low self-esteem. And though these women regale colleagues with glowing tales about their precocious children, they secretly torment themselves about the "choices" they've made, devouring articles like one that appeared recently in *The Washington Post*: "The New Silent Generation: What Our Day Care Kids Don't Learn." The author warns that day care—and, even worse, foreign-born nannies—can be the prelude to future learning disabilities like Attention Deficit Disorder. But it's not enough to wallow quietly in guilt. As Hillary Clinton discovered, you must offer some palpable proof of your devotion to your children—even if it's transparently false. A confidential campaign memo by James Carville and other Clinton handlers, who were worried about Hillary's public image as a tough woman "going for the power," advised creating an event where Bill and Chelsea would "surprise" her on Mother's Day. For the run-of-the-mill mother the contortions are less staged but more frantic: she rushes them through dinner so she can make it to the school fund-raiser, hustles them off to bed early so she can get to work on their Halloween costumes, and rouses them at dawn on Saturday to get them out the door on time for ballet class, soccer practice, and MarVaTots.



IN MEMORY OF ALICE AND MARY, I propose a halt to all hypocritical genuflecting at the altar of motherhood. That means, first, an end to patronizing tributes to women. It might include a ceremonial burning of the Annie Leibovitz photo essay in the December issue of *Vanity Fair*, "A Few Good Women," which features the usual suspects, including—who else?—Tina Brown. "Women and ladies got on with it in 1992," it says: "bearing the kids and sticking up for them; acting as den mothers for forgotten constituencies; brushing the dandruff from the shoulders of the frazzled breadwinner.... But you couldn't shake the idea that something was *afoot*." Second, the phrases "family values," "tea and cookies," and "Barbara Bush" should be banned from political discourse. Third, no more newspaper boilerplate about what kind of First Lady Hillary will be, like the recent example in *The New York Times*: "Both feminist partisans and anti-feminist critics are wondering whether Hillary can be Hillary without meddling with the nation's myths."

SIXTY YEARS AGO, ELEANOR ROOSEvelt proposed simply abolishing the title of First Lady. Good idea. As Carl S. Anthony recalls in the current *Smithsonian*, the candidates' wives have often shown themselves to be, if anything, more bloodlessly ambitious than the candidates. One day William Howard Taft, then Theodore Roosevelt's secretary of war, paid a White House visit with his wife, Nellie. "TR joked that he saw something looming over Taft," writes Anthony, "but couldn't tell if it was the Chief Justiceship or the Presidency. 'Make it the Chief Justiceship,' piped up Taft. 'Make it the Presidency,' commanded Nellie." And compared with Florence Harding, Hillary Clinton looks demure. In 1920, the first presidential election in which women had the right to vote, Florence defiantly declared, "Yes, I'm a suffragist!" When Harding began to falter during the Indiana primary, "she grabbed the phone from him as he was about to tell his manager he was pulling out of the race and yelled that he was in it 'until hell freezes over!'" But my favorite is Lincoln's reaction upon hearing he'd won. Honest Abe shouted to Mary, who was openly lusting for victory: "We are elected!" James Carville would have been appalled.

DOROTHY WICKENDEN

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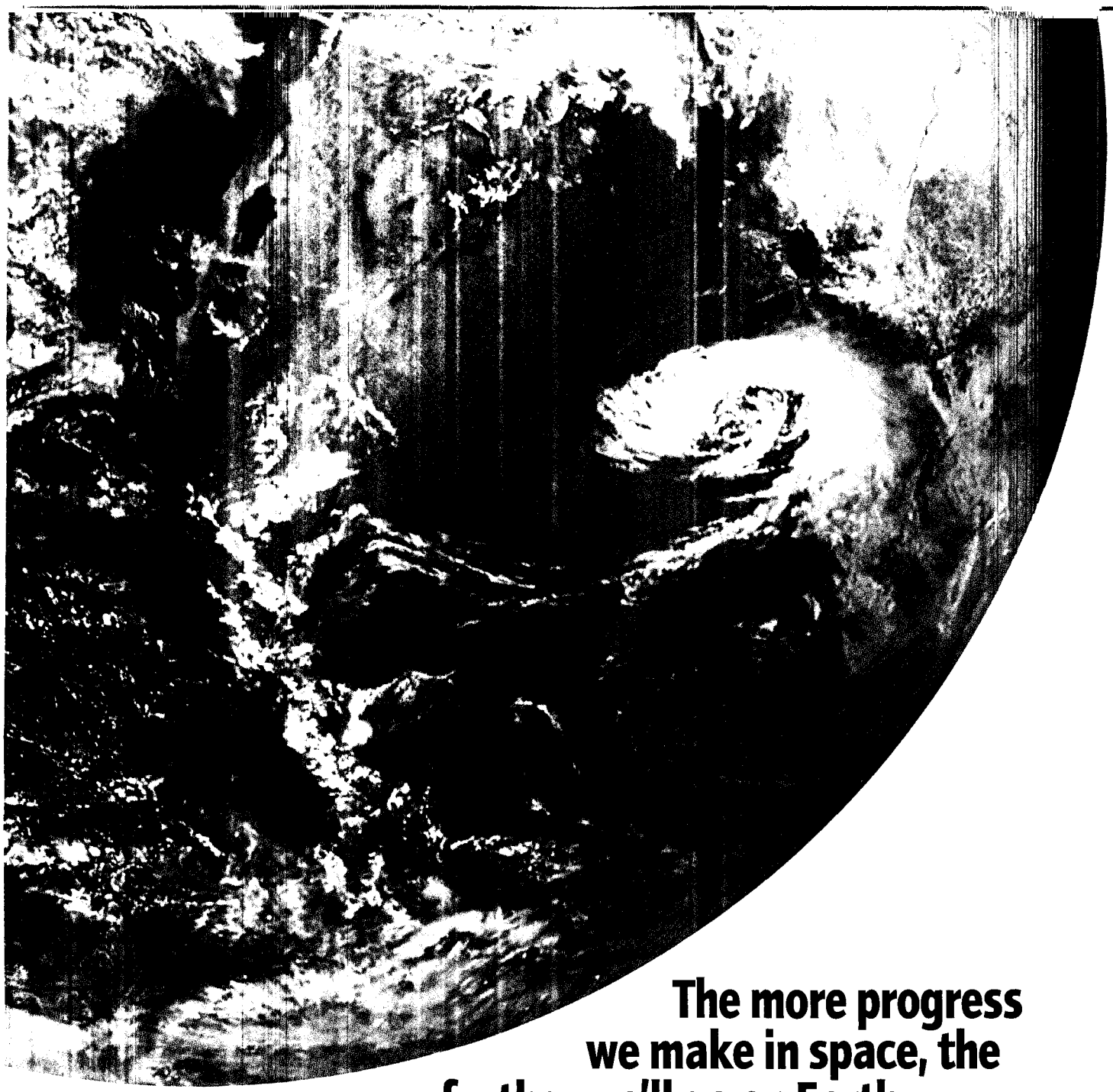

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